TOTAL BUDGET OUTLAY
₹4.48L cr

GSDP growth 8.1%

This is a third revenue deficit budget in a row. The deficit is estimated at ₹22,957 cr

Govt will borrow ₹1.32L cr to fund its budget

Fiscal deficit stands at ₹97,449 cr at 2.95% of GSDP.

Total liabilities stand at ₹8,24,389 cr at 24.94% of GSDP.

At 43%, GST is the largest contributor to State's tax revenue.

RS 51,599 CRORE ALLOCATED FOR 5 GUARANTEES

- Rs 28,608 crore for Gruha Lakshmi.
- Rs 10,578 for Gruha Jyothi.
- Rs 6,200 crore for Anna Bhagya.
- Rs 5,300 for Shakti Scheme.
- Rs 913 crore for Yuva Nidhi.

Reduced Central share, discriminatory allocation in Central Sector schemes, injustice due to 15th Finance Commission's revenue sharing formula, non-implementation of special grants, and the untimely rationalisation of the GST rates have put pressure on the State exchequer

Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

This budget is bland. It has no new projects. The only new project is more and more borrowing. In the last three years, the state added a loan of Rs 4.39 lakh crore. The next governments will not be in a position to pay the interest, let alone the principal amount

R Ashoka, BJP leader

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڵار روزنامەی بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 7 MARCH 2026 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 17 RAMADAN, 1447 H Vol 5 | Issue No 58 | Pages: 8

With welfare Budget, CM guarantees dvpt

Major sops given for minorities, AI, education

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday presented his record 17th Budget, which majorly pushed for development that combined welfare guarantees with infrastructure investment and long-term economic transformation.

The Budget comes amid power tussle in Congress for the Chief Minster's post

Presenting the 2026–27, Siddaramaiah said Congress had prioritised economic security and social stability since coming to power in 2023 through its five guarantee schemes. The guarantees include Gruha Jyothi, which offers 200 units of free electricity per household; Gruha Lakshmi, providing Rs 2,000 per month to women heads of families; Anna Bhagya, supplying 10 kg of rice to each BPL family member; Yuva Nidhi, which supports unemployed graduates and diploma holders; and the Shakti Scheme, allowing free travel for women in state-run non-luxury buses.

Siddaramaiah said Rs 1,21,598 crore had been spent on these schemes until February.

He said that fiscal discipline had been maintained despite substantial welfare spending.

The government is also developing a Karnataka-specific "11G model" to guide economic growth. The framework focuses on gig-economy welfare and geographical equality among many others.

Seeking to reinforce the government's social justice agenda, the Budget also proposed the establishment of a Scheduled Tribes Commission and a Buddhist Development Corporation. Additional initiatives were announced for minority communities, including new residential schools, hostels, training centres and economic empowerment programmes.

The Budget also proposes implementation of the Rohith Vemula Act to address caste-based discrimination.

Other proposals include an IT park in Mangaluru, development of Mysuru as the State's second IT hub, and the creation of a Bengaluru Robotics and AI Innovation Zone. Free insulin pens will also be provided to children under 18 living with Type 1 diabetes.

Siddaramaiah said the State, a major contributor to national tax revenues, deserved greater support from the Centre. He criticised Centre for undermining federalism, alleging that GST rate restructuring had reduced the State's collections by Rs 10,000 crore this year and could lead to a further RS 15,000-crore loss next year. He also accused the Centre of weakening the MNREGA, arguing that cuts to rural employment programmes increase the financial burden on states.

Responding to criticism from BJP leaders including R Ashoka over rising debt, the Chief Minister said borrowing for development remained within fiscal responsibility limits. *—PTI*

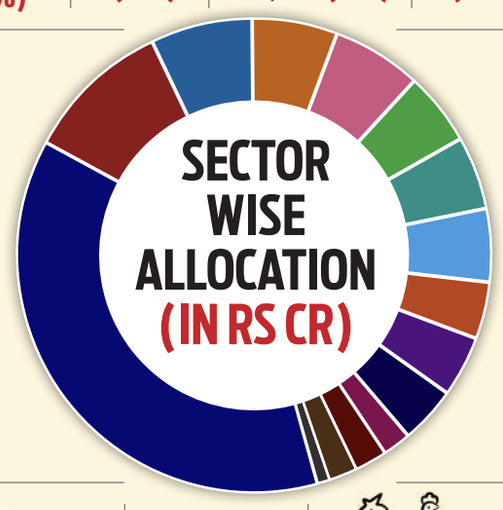
>>>More on Pgs 2, 3, 4 & 5

Siddaramaiah's record 17th Budget

CM'S '11 G' MODEL

- Guarantee Economy.
- Good Public Education.
- Good Health to All.
- Grassroots Economy.
- Good Governance.
- Gig Economy.
- Geographical Equity.
- Global Trade Economy.
- Globe-Trotting Economy.
- Green Economy.
- Growing Urban Economy.

SECTOR WISE ALLOCATION (IN RS CR)



Education	47,224 (10%)
Women and Child Welfare	34,929 (7%)
Energy	29,947 (6%)
Rural Development and Panchayat Raj	26,559 (6%)
Irrigation	22,436 (5%)
Urban Development and Housing	22,203 (5%)
Home Affairs and Transport	23,100 (5%)
Health	17,817 (4%)
Social Welfare	18,612 (4%)
Revenue	19,843 (4%)
Public Works	11,424 (2%)
Food	7,942 (2%)
Agriculture	8,373 (2%)
Animal Husbandry and Fisheries	4,084 (1%)
Others	1,72,757 (37%)

BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Karnataka to cut sales tax on LNG from 14.34% to 5%.
- 2nd airport will be developed in Bengaluru after obtaining technical advice from the Airports Authority of India.
- Rs 40,000 cr given to develop 40km of roads in Bengaluru.
- Govt moots river crusie, sea plane, heli-taxi to promote tourism in coastal belt.
- 56,432 vacant govt posts including 8,000 in Home Dept to be filled.
- 80,000-seat cricket stadium to be built near Bengaluru.
- Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru to be renamed after Shantaveri Gopalagowda.

50 flyers from K'taka stranded in West Asia return

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Fifty passengers from the State who were stranded in the Gulf region amid the ongoing West Asia conflict arrived in Delhi early Friday morning after departing from Fujairah in the UAE, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's office said. The protocol team were at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi with breakfast, it said stating that they were transported on a KSRP bus and two cars to domestic terminals for their onward travel to Bengaluru, Mangaluru and Hubballi. It is also stated that many were disgruntled and complained that MEA did nothing, and it was the local organisation that helped them with their tickets. "We are the only state so far that is providing this assistance at the Delhi airport," it added. *—PTI*

124 Bangladeshis held in Bengaluru for illegal stay

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

In a special operation, the Central Crime Branch (CCB) on Friday took into custody 124 Bangladeshi nationals who were allegedly residing illegally in Bengaluru, police said. Among them were 48 men, 42 women and 34 children. In the early hours, four special teams comprising officers and staff of the CCB conducted a targeted operation in the jurisdiction of Kadugodi and Varthur police stations, police said. "During the operation, 124 Bangladeshi nationals who had allegedly constructed temporary sheds and were residing there illegally were taken into custody," the office of Bengaluru City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said. Police said 200 foreign nationals have been detained in the drive so far. *—PTI*

In a 1st, K'taka bans social media for kids under 16

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Karnataka has become the first Indian state to ban social media use for children under 16, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced while presenting the 2026–27 state Budget on Friday.

"With the objective of preventing adverse effects of increasing mobile usage on children, usage of social media will be banned for those under 16," Siddaramaiah said. He did not, however, provide details on how the ban will be implemented.

Earlier in January, IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge told the Assembly that the state was consulting experts on ensuring responsible AI and social media use, particularly for children. The Economic Survey tabled in Parliament recommended age-based access to online platforms and reducing online teaching to prevent digital addiction.

Some parents, like Bengaluru resident Manohar NH, welcomed the move but expressed doubts over enforcement, citing challenges in monitoring children's social media use. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

41KM OF METRO TO BE BUILT BY 2027

'Namma Metro' is the second-largest metro rail network in the country, Siddaramaiah said. The current operational network spans 96km, benefiting 10 lakh commuters every day.

"Out of Rs 67,460 crore expenditure incurred till date, the State share is 59,376 crore and Central share is Rs 8,084 crore. The Central share accounts to only 12 per cent against the 88 per cent State share," he said. "It is proposed to complete a total of 41km of additional Metro lines during the financial year 2026-27. This will benefit approximately 15 lakh commuters daily," he said, adding that a 9km long pedestrian walkway along the Metro viaduct on the Outer Ring Road (ORR) will be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 160 crore, under the sponsorship of Outer Ring Road Companies Association. *—Salar News*

Govt won't control liquor prices anymore

Siddaramaiah announced that the State will adopt a globally recognised taxation system linking excise duty to the alcohol content of beverages, as part of an overhaul of the 60-year-old Karnataka Excise Act.

Presenting the reform, he introduced the Alcohol-in-Beverage excise duty structure, which will come into effect from April. Under the new system, excise duty will be levied based on alcohol content per litre. The transition will be implemented in stages over three to four years to avoid disruption in the market.

"Product placement within slabs will be left to producers based on market considerations," he said, while setting a revenue target of Rs 45,000 crore from the excise sector for 2026–27.

The government will also encourage tourism linked to the alcohol sector by permitting distilleries and breweries to conduct tasting sessions and sell products. Pricing slabs for alcoholic beverages will be rationalised and reduced to eight from the existing 16. Manufacturing licences will be auto-renewed, while label approvals and licences will be given online. *—PTI*

GEN-Z's FAVOURITE

Rapper Balen Shah likely to be Nepal's next PM

KATHMANDU, 6 MARCH

Rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah's newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) is heading towards a sweeping victory in Nepal's first general elections since the violent Gen Z protests, shattering the dominance of established political parties in the politically fragile nation in 2025

According to the Election Commission's data available from 144 of the total 165 constituencies, the RSP has won three seats and is ahead in 104 others.

Balendra Shah, who was the Mayor of Kathmandu till recently, is leading in Jhapa-5 constituency against four-time Prime Minister and CPN-UML Chair K P Sharma Oli in the latter's stronghold. Shah, popularly known as Balen, received 6,551 votes, while Oli got just 1,428 votes.

The election was closely watched by India, which hopes for a stable government in the politically fragile Himalayan nation to take forward the developmental partnership between the two sides. "We look forward to working with the new Government of Nepal to further build on the robust multifaceted ties between our two countries and peoples for mutual benefit," Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in Delhi. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pg 6

US 'lets' India buy Russian oil for 30 days

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 6 MARCH

Amid the escalating conflict with Iran, the US said it is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refineries to purchase Russian oil.

"President Trump's energy agenda has resulted in oil and gas production reaching the highest levels ever recorded. To enable oil to keep flowing into the global market, the Treasury Department is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refineries to purchase Russian oil," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday. He said this "deliberately short-term measure" will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government, as it only authorises transactions involving oil already stranded at sea.

Meanwhile, Indian refiners have begun snapping up millions of barrels of Russian oil floating in Asian waters after the waiver, but are seeking legal opinion on whether the exemption also permits buying from sanctioned entities, sources said. Indian refiners have snapped up some 20 million barrels of Russian oil, mostly from non-sanctioned entities, they said, adding that the companies are seeking legal opinion if the waiver permits purchase of oil from even sanctioned entities.

Trump's aide Christopher Landau said that Washington would not grant India the sweeping economic benefits it once extended to China, which, in turn, allowed Beijing to emerge as its key rival.

Meanwhile, The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has issued an order directing BARC to suspend television ratings for news channels for four weeks amid concerns over sensational coverage of the war. *—PTI*

India denies giving ship intel to US

Government sources described as "baseless and preposterous" claims that the Indian Navy provided intelligence to the US on an Iranian frigate that was sunk by a US military submarine . The US sank the Iranian warship off the coast of Sri Lanka on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday and warned that the attack on an "unarmed ship cannot go with impunity".

"That vessel was by invitation of our Indian friends. It was ceremonial. It was unloaded. It was unarmed," he said. *—PTI*

Iranian ship docks in Kochi

India has allowed the Iranian naval vessel IRIS Lavan to dock urgently at Kochi after it developed technical problems, government said on Friday. The request from Iran was received on 28 February and approval was granted on 1 March. The vessel, which had been in the region for the International Fleet Review, docked on 4 March.

The move came days before the sinking of IRIS Dena by a US submarine.

All 183 crew members are currently accommodated at naval facilities in Kochi. *—PTI*

Namma Budget 2026

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2

100
Skywalks to be built over the next 3 years.

Rs 450 crore
to develop the ORR stretch from Silk Board Junction to KR Puram Metro Station as a global-standard corridor.

Tunnel Corridors

- 2 new tunnel corridors to come up.
- Length 40km
- Cost Rs 40,000 crore under the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) model.
- North–South corridor: Hebbal Junction to HSR Layout Silk Board
- Tenders invited for the 17km North–South corridor at Rs 17,780 crore.
- East–West corridor: KR Puram to Mysuru Road.

New Master Plan, CMP soon

A Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) will be prepared within six months. These are long-term, strategic document that guides urban transport development, focusing on integrating land use & efficient mobility solutions for people & goods. The government said that a New Revised Master Plan-2041 for Bengaluru will be implemented by the end of 2027.

Will make B'luru world's most liveable City: CM

Budget earmarks crores for new roads, tunnels & flyovers

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

In his record 17th Budget, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said his government's top priority is to make Bengaluru the "world's most liveable City", and to this effect he announced a slew of measures. Major road infrastructure projects, Namma Metro expansion, tunnel corridors, and plans for a second airport were the biggest announcements for Bengaluru.

To ease Bengaluru's choking traffic, he proposed to develop Mysuru as the second IT city of the State. He said the government aims to improve infrastructure to attract more firms to Mysuru.

There was some cheer some Metro users too with the Budget announcing an additional 41km of metro lines by 2027.

The 96-km Namma Metro network serves at least 10 lakh commuters daily.

In 2025-26, the government increased Bengaluru development grant from Rs 3,000 crore to Rs 7,000 crore, and this grant will be continued in the current year.

He said that the five City Corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority will mobilise resources by issuing 'Municipal Bonds' based on their balance sheets.

The government will also undertake Karnataka Water Security and Disaster Resilience Programme between 2025 and 2031, at a cost of Rs 5,000 crore, of which Rs 3,500 crore will be a World Bank loan and Rs 1,500 crore will be from the State.

Under this, flood Management System will be taken up in GBA area at Rs 2,000 crore.

Waste water treatment plant and sewage pumping system will be set up by BWSSB at Rs 1,070 crore. Rs 1,680 crore will be provided for Disaster Management. —*PTI*

To ease Bengaluru's choking traffic, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah proposed to develop Mysuru as the second IT city of the State —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

ROADS, FOOTPATHS AND SKYWALKS

Ward roads and infrastructure works have been undertaken for Rs 1,255 crore.White topping of at least 450km of roads will be taken up at Rs 3,000 crore in the next three years.

The Budget also aims to beautify 175 junctions, upgrade 500km footpaths and construct 100 skywalks over the next three years.

ACCIDENT BLACK SPOTS

To manage accident black spots in the State, including Bengaluru, a modern software system with a dashboard will be developed at Rs 5 crore with IIT Madras and NIC.

MORE TUNNELS AND FLYOVERS

To mitigate traffic congestion in Bengaluru, the land acquisition process for the construction of the 73 km long Bengaluru Business Corridor Phase-1 from Tumkuru Road to Hosur Road is progressing rapidly, Siddaramaiah said. The North-South Corridor project from Hebbal Junction to HSR Layout Silk Board and the East-West Corridor project from KR Puram to Mysore Road, covering a total of 40km of tunnel roads, have been approved at an estimated cost of Rs 40,000 crore under the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer model, he said. In the first phase, tenders have been invited for the 17 km long North-South Corridor project at a cost of Rs 17,780 crore. A Tunnel Road and an Elevated Road from Hebbal Junction to Mekhri Circle will be constructed by the Bangalore Development Authority at a cost of Rs 2,250 crore, he added.

DRINKING WATER

The CM said to provide drinking water to approximately 1.40 crore people of Bengaluru city, a total of 2,225 MLD of water is being supplied through the Phases I to V of the Cauvery Water Supply Project.

"Our government has now formulated the Cauvery Phase VI project at a cost of Rs 6,939 crore with JICA assistance to supply an additional six TMC of water," he said.

Govt resumes hot-cooked meals for moms

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

The Karnataka Budget 2026, presented by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, places a strong emphasis on maternal health and strengthening the State's healthcare infrastructure.

A key announcement is the restoration of the Mathru Poorna scheme, which will replace take-home rations with hot cooked meals for expectant and nursing mothers, aiming to reduce anaemia and malnutrition.

Under the ongoing 'Mission Zero Preventable Maternal Death Initiative', launched in 2025, Karnataka has recorded a 24 per cent reduction in the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). Every maternal death is reviewed by an expert technical committee to improve care.

Victoria Hospital will be renamed Shanthaveri Gopalagowda Hospital, reflecting the government's focus on modernising healthcare delivery across Karnataka.

The budget allocates Rs 620 crore for the construction of medical colleges, super speciality hospitals, and state hospitals, Rs 220 crore for medical equipment, and Rs 10 crore for a boys' hostel at Bengaluru Medical College. Other allocations include Rs 180 crore to expand Mysuru's Jayadeva Cardiovascular Hospital from 400 to 600 beds, Rs 100 crore each for super speciality hospitals in Karwar and Yadgir, and the establishment of a cancer hospital at Munirabad's Tungabhadra Dam. IVF centres will be set up at Vani Vilas Hospital, Bengaluru, and Gulbarga Institute of Medical Sciences.

Other initiatives include Rs 900 crore for health infrastructure, Rs 400 crore for Ayushman Bharat-Arogya Karnataka scheme, emergency care upgrades, nutrition rehabilitation centres, free insulin pens for children with Type 1 diabetes, dialysis capacity expansion, digital health record systems, and filing of 2,500 vacant health department posts. —*PTI*

> **Poor people do not receive the money or real benefits from the Budget. Every year the government claims that thousands of crores have been allocated for healthcare, yet there is no visible improvement in hospitals. Many schemes meant for the poor do not reach them properly. Even basic facilities such as medicines, equipment, and scanning are unavailable in govt hospitals. Doctors write prescriptions for medicines that must be bought from outside because they are not available in the hospital. Hence, budget announcements are just for political purposes.**
>
> —Chandrashekhar, farmer

Victoria Hospital, started in 1900, is one of the iconic City landmarks —*x*

'Science City' to come up at Adinarayana Hosahalli, Bengaluru at the cost of ₹33 cr. DPR has been prepared.

6 new planetariums in Vijayanagar, Ballari, Chitradurga, Yadgir, Koppal and Bidar at Rs 4 crore each.

Kaveri 2.0 to implement new E-Stamping system, allowing citizens to pay stamp duty directly to govt.

Rs 100 crore project to develop Chamundi Hill as a global tourist destination, subject to environmental and UNESCO approvals.

Budget shows intent to drive growth: Sajjan Raj

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Trade Union activist **Sajjan Raj Mehta** has said the Karnataka Budget for 2026-27 presented by CM Siddaramaiah on Friday showed the government's intent towards economic growth but stressed on timely implementation of infrastructure projects to strengthen trade and business activities in the State.

"Overall, the budget shows intent toward economic growth, but timely execution and business-friendly reforms will be key to ensuring that trade, employment and urban development receive real momentum," Mehta said.

He said the Budget has placed encouraging emphasis on infrastructure development, urban mobility and skill development, essential for strengthening trade and business activity in the state.

Mehta also hinted at the likely adverse ramifications of the government's guarantee schemes. "The burden of #GuaranteeSchemes is quite visible as huge amount is at stake." He however said investments in road networks, metro expansion and urban infrastructure in Bengaluru would improve connectivity and ease movement of goods and people, which directly benefits the trading community.

The focus on skill development and filling government vacancies are positive steps toward addressing employment concerns. —*Salar News*

QUANTUM RESEARCH PARK

Budget eyes 'Asia's quantum capital' tag

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

The government made a slew of announcements for quantum and artificial intelligence (AI) fields.

"To promote the development of quantum technology a Quantum Research Park Phase-2 will be set up with a grant of Rs 48 crore over the next three years in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru (IISc)," Siddaramaiah said in his Budget speech.

An AI and Robotics Technology Park under IISC will set up this facility in collaboration with ISRO and Karnataka State Electronics Development Corporation Limited (KEONICS), he added.

This is being done to further strengthen the AI sector, he said.

—AI

Drone testing facility to be set up in Chikkaballapur.

₹200 cr allocated for Local Economy Accelerator Programme (LEAP).

> **Our State has contributed to 43% of India's IT exports. Under the new IT Policy 2025-30, software exports are expected to reach Rs 11.5 lakh crore by 2030... Bengaluru is also ranked 5th in the world's top 50 AI cities in the field of AI and Big Data**
>
> —Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

ROBOTICS TECH PART

Chief Minister **Siddaramaiah** said that a technology campus called "Bangalore Robotics and AI Innovation Zone" will be set up this year.

A Centre of Excellence for AI will be set up at IIIT Raichur at a cost of Rs 5 crore.

Noting that Karnataka is the first State to introduce the Global Capability Center (GCC) Policy, the CM said, as a result of the progressive policies of the government, more than 550 GCCs are currently operating in the State.

"Under this policy, the target is to establish 500 new GCCs in the State by 2029, which are expected to create employment for 3.5 lakh people and generate an economic output of USD 50 billion. A new IT park will be established in Mangalore to promote GCC by KEONICS," he said.

Rs 10 crore will be allocated to implement the first phase of the Quantum Road Map over five years and this will train and develop high-quality human resources required in the quantum technology sector, he said.

To increase employment opportunities through long-term industry-academia partnerships, a super 100 industry-academia adoption programme will be implemented in collaboration with Karnataka Digital Economy Mission(KDEM).

HEALTH IN AI

The CM said that infrastructure facilities will be developed at the Centre for Human Genetics at a total cost of Rs 20 crore to accommodate the newly established Institute of Advanced Genome Editing and Gene Therapy, along with other biotechnology-based laboratories.

"Rs 4 crore will be allocated for the development of an advanced surgical-assisted robot (COBOT)" in collaboration with IIIT-Bangalore and NIMHANS. This technology will facilitate improved outcomes in neurosurgical procedures, he added.

Karnataka State has moved up from 21st position in the previous year to 14th in the global start-up ecosystem and is home to over 18,000 active Start-ups, he said.

Karnataka ranks among the leading states in the ESDM and semiconductor sectors, he said. —*Agencies*

Reforms for Kannada film industry: Tickets capped at Rs 200 per show

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday unveiled a set of comprehensive reforms for the Kannada film industry as part of the 2026-27 budget. To make cinema accessible to everyone, the cost of the tickets for each show including in multiplexes would capped at Rs 200.

The Chief Minister said that the cinema sector would be given the status of an industry and the facilities provided under the Industrial Policy would be extended to sector.

The initiatives focus on streamlining production processes, developing infrastructure, supporting filmmakers financially, and preserving the state's cinematic and historical legacy.

Some of the other measures include setting up of a repository of Kannada movies in digital and non-digital formats at a cost of Rs.3 crore, creation of an OTT platform to promote Kannada movies, developing of a multiplex movie theater complex will be developed under Public Private Partnership (PPP) in 2.5 acre land owned by the Karnataka Film Academy in the City.

A Film City will be set up in Mysuru at the cost of Rs. 500 crore under the PPP model on a parcel of 150-acre of land, the CM said. —*Salar News*

- Chief Minister said that the cinema sector would be given the status of an industry and the facilities provided under the Industrial Policy would be extended to sector

—AI

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MINORITIES GET MAJOR SOPS

₹600 cr given to Maulana Azad schools; Students can avail subsidised loans

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday announced a wide range of education, welfare and infrastructure initiatives for minority communities in the State Budget.

A loan of Rs 1 lakh per annum at a subsidised interest rate of 2 per cent would be provided to minority students under the 'Arivu' (Awareness) educational loan scheme.

To meet growing demand for student accommodation, the government will start 25 new post-matric hostels with a capacity of 150 students each in high-demand districts. The intake in 25 existing hostels will also be increased by 50 students.

Ten Saint Shishunala Shariff Residential Schools with the CBSE curriculum will be established this year with an allocation of Rs 10 crore. A further 25 schools will be started in 2026–27.

The government will upgrade 117 Maulana Azad Model Schools and Urdu Schools into Karnataka Public Schools at a cost of Rs 600 crore. An additional 100 schools will be upgraded this year at a cost of Rs 400 crore.

—AI

PUC Science and Commerce streams will be introduced in 25 Morarji Desai Residential Schools, while the Commerce stream will begin in 18 APJ Abdul Kalam Residential Schools. Four minority residential schools will be developed as Centres of Excellence to provide coaching for K-CET, JEE and NEET examinations.

To support women, four working women's hostels with a capacity of 100 each will be set up in Bengaluru. Another 10 hostels for SC/ST working women will be established in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Hubballi-Dharwad, Mangaluru, Belagavi and Kalaburagi.

The government earmarked Rs 100 crore for the comprehensive development of Jain, Buddhist and Sikh communities and announced a Rs 6,000 monthly honorarium for Dhammacharis of the Buddhist community.

To promote digital education, 5,000 economically weaker meritorious students will receive Rs 50,000 each to purchase laptops.

Unemployed minority youth will receive Fast Food Truck Trailers or Mobile Kitchen Food Kiosks with 75 per cent subsidy up to Rs 3 lakh. Minority Women Co-operative Societies will be formed to support self-help groups.

Hajj Bhavans will be constructed in Hubballi and Kalaburagi, while 31 women's PU colleges under Waqf institutions will be upgraded to degree colleges.

Waqf properties in prime commercial areas will be developed through a public-private partnership model.

The Budget also includes Rs 660 crore for constructing buildings in 30 KREIS residential schools. —*PTI*

EDU FOR ALL

₹390 crore
to open 800 Karnataka Public Schools.

Free text books for PU students

Free distribution of value education books from
class 1 to 12

₹5 crore
for AI tech learning for students from class 8 to 12.

CM announces filling of
15,000
teacher posts.

Student union elections are now back. University of Visvesvaraya College of Engineering will be developed on IIT model with Rs 500 cr. Guest lecturers will get 90-day maternity leave.

Will push for Mekedatu reservoir project: CM

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said the government will push ahead with major irrigation and drinking water projects, including the long-pending Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir Project.

He described the Supreme Court's dismissal of petitions filed by Tamil Nadu against the Mekedatu project as a "significant legal victory" for Karnataka. The State will soon submit a revised Detailed Project Report along with a proposal for forest clearance to the Union government. Tamil Nadu has opposed the project, citing concerns about downstream water availability in the Cauvery River.

ZERO PROGRESS ON NAVALI RESERVOIR

Navali reservoir still remain on paper. The proposed reservoir in Koppal was once again mentioned in the Budget but there was nothing more.

A reservoir is also being discussed with Andhra Pradesh and Telangana through the Tungabhadra Board to address storage loss due to silt accumulation in the Tungabhadra Dam. The State will replace 33 dilapidated dam gates before the monsoon.

He criticised delays in forest clearance for the Kalasa-Bandura Project under the Mahadayi Basin.

IRRIGATION SCHEMES

Under the Yettinahole Comprehensive Drinking Water Project, the first phase of lift irrigation works has been commissioned, while the remaining 18.73 km canal works in the second phase are expected to be completed soon. A 1.2 TMC balancing reservoir will be constructed near Vaderahalli in Koratagere taluk.

On the Upper Bhadra Project, Siddaramaiah said a long-standing land dispute has been resolved, enabling the completion of the 135km Chitradurga branch canal and feeder works by 2027. The project is expected to fill 157 tanks. Although it has national importance status, the Centre has not released funds, he said, noting the state has already spent Rs 11,343 crore.

Under the Upper Krishna Project, compensation has been fixed at Rs 30 lakh per acre for dry land and Rs 40 lakh per acre for wet land due to the raising of the Almatti Dam height.

NEW SCHEMES

New initiatives include the Uduthore Halla project in Hanurtaluk of Chamarajanagar district, costing Rs 490 crore, which will provide drinking water and irrigate 12,000 acres. The government has also given in-principle approval for a 0.67 TMC reservoir at Babanagar in Vijayapura district under the Tubachi-Babaleshwara scheme. The state plans to undertake 75 irrigation works worth Rs 8,045 crore across the Krishna Basin, Cauvery Basin and Godavari Basin.

The government announced the third phase of the Hebbala-Nagawara Valley tank-filling scheme costing Rs 237 crore to fill 164 tanks, works in Hosakote taluk worth Rs 140 crore, and the second phase of the Vrushabhavathi Valley tank-filling scheme at Rs 650 crore. —*PTI*

Rohith Vemula Bill to curb caste discrimination against students

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced that the State will enact the Rohith Vemula Bill to prevent caste-based atrocities against students in government, private and deemed universities.

The proposed legislation is named after Dalit PhD scholar from Gunthur Rohith Vemula, who died by suicide in 2016 following alleged discrimination in Telangana.

Siddaramaiah also announced the reinstatement of students' union elections in colleges and universities.

He also said the Karnataka Higher Education Transformation Project will be implemented at Rs 2,500 crore from Asian Development Bank. Under this, 40 government first grade colleges and

Dalit PhD scholar from Guntur Rohith Vemula died by suicide in 2016 following alleged discrimination in Telangana —*ANI*

11 polytechnics will be developed as model institutions, while nine Centres of Excellence will be set up to promote entrepreneurship and start-up culture.

NEW COURSES

The government will introduce 15 new high-demand courses, including Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Cloud Computing, Mining Engineering and Automation Engineering, in 11 government polytechnics and a government engineering college in Chitradurga.

In partnership with AnitaB.org India, skill development training will be provided to 3,000 female STEM graduates at Rs 13.5 crore. The State has allocated Rs 31 crore to upgrade institutions with more than 50 per cent female enrolment and Rs 220 crore for equipment procurement. —*PTI*

State to get 9 new railway projects

The Karnataka government has allocated Rs 600 crore for railway projects this year, with several new lines proposed across the State.

New routes include Ginigera–Raichur, Tumakuru–Rayadurg, Chikkamagaluru–Belur, Kudchi–Bagalkot, Gadag–Wadi, Tumakuru–Davanagere, Belur–Hassan, Shivamogga–Shikaripura–Ranibennur and Dharwad–Kittur–Belagavi.

The construction and land acquisition costs for the Ginigera–Raichur and Tumakuru–Rayadurg lines will be shared between the Centre and the State on a 50:50 basis. For the remaining seven routes, the State will bear the entire land acquisition cost along with 50 per cent of the construction cost.

BENGALURU SUB-URBAN RAILWAY

Under the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project, land acquisition for Corridor-2 between Benniganahalli and Chikkabanavara has been completed and construction is underway. Land acquisition for Corridor-4 between Heelalige and Rajanukunte is in progress, with completion targeted by December 2030. The Budget has allocated Rs 500 crore for the project.

- The Karnataka government has allocated Rs 600 crore for railway projects this year, with several new lines proposed across the State.

Railway capacity enhancement works are also progressing. The Baiyappanahalli–Hosur and Yeshwanthpur–Channasandra line doubling project, costing Rs 812 crore, includes a State contribution of Rs 406 crore.

Rs 100km allocated for doubling railway line. —*Salar News*

'UNHEALTHY COMPARISONS ONLINE'

'Social media ban will help stop depression in kids'

—FREEPIK

Experts have largely welcomed the Karnataka government's decision to ban social media use for children under 16, saying the move could help address rising mental health concerns among youngsters.

Dr Saritha Nagaraj, Consultant in Psychology and Child Development at Motherhood Hospital, said restricting social media could reduce the risk of depression, anxiety, poor sleep and body image issues among children and teenagers. She noted that unhealthy comparisons on online platforms often lead to low self-esteem and disordered eating. "Cognitive performance and emotional regulation are also likely to improve. Exposure to dangerous content will decrease, and this could help improve attention span as well as academic performance," she said.

> **Banning social media for children under 16 years will prevent them from falling prey to evil online. It will also strengthen family bonds between children and parents... Residents of Kolar were expecting an announcement of a government medical college in this year's Budget, but no allocation has been made**
>
> —Dr Hemavathi Devaraj, gynaecologist in Kolar

However, Dr Rakshay Shetty, Clinical Director and Head of Paediatric Intensive Care Services at Rainbow Children's Hospital, called for a balanced approach. While acknowledging the psychological harms of excessive mobile use, he said digital devices also provide practical benefits for parents, teachers and students. A blanket ban, he cautioned, could be counterproductive and difficult to enforce.

Meanwhile, BJP MP Lahar Singh Siroya welcomed the move, stating in a post on X that he had raised the issue in Parliament. He also referred to Narendra Modi highlighting the need to safeguard young people's interests at a recent AI summit.

Industry experts also weighed in on the decision. Upasna Dash, founder and CEO of Jajabor Brand Consultancy, said the policy could reshape how advertisers reach younger audiences, though brands targeting children existed long before social media through word-of-mouth and traditional advertising. Aparajita Bharti, founding partner at The Quantum Hub, argued the ban may not be effective in India due to shared device usage in many households and the difficulty of clearly defining "social media". She urged policymakers to focus on making the entire internet safer for children rather than targeting specific platforms.. —*PTI*

Women and child development

- Incentives increased from ₹30,000 to ₹45,000 for former Devadasis.
- Anganwadi workers to get 1 extra uniforms
- ₹5 cr to support higher education of ex-Devadasis' children.
- ₹200 cr for Anganwadi buildings in the Kalyana Karnataka.
- Drug addiction rehabilitation centres to be set for under 18s.

Transport

- ₹1,271 cr for arrears to employees of State Road Transport Corporations.
- 1,000 new diesel buses to coming soon.
- ₹2,000 cr to develop 32 BMTC and 62 other depots & 4,000 electric buses.

Law

- ₹175 cr for construction of court buildings and residential quarters for judges.
- Construction of district court complex in Ramanagara.
- ₹10 cr for e-courts in Bengaluru, Dharwad, Kalaburagi, and Mysuru.

Commerce & Industries

- ₹600 cr allocated for B'luru–Mumbai Industrial Corridor. A 1,000-acre of Industrial Node to be made in Dharwad, which will create 75,000 jobs.
- ₹500 cr for 100 acre Construction and Infrastructure Testing Unit in Mandya.
- ₹225 crore for weavers.
- ₹75 crore for PM Mitra Mega Textile Park, Kalaburagi.
- ₹30 crore for Aerospace Facility Centre in KIADB Aerospace Park.
- Aerospace Park planned adjacent to Mysore Airport.
- 1,000-acre industrial park to be developed in Belagavi.

Home Dept

- ₹250 cr to build residential quarters under Police Gruha 2025 Scheme.
- ₹30 cr for establishment of 12 new police stations.
- Food allowance increased from Rs 150 to Rs 300 for Fire and Emergency Services staff.

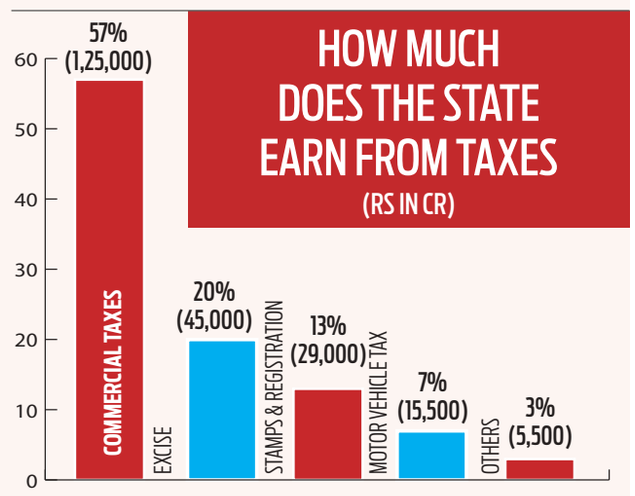
Life in Jail

- ₹20 crore to prevent use of mobile phones, marijuana, and other prohibited items in prisons. Establishment of Drug De-Addiction Centre in Bengaluru Central Prison.

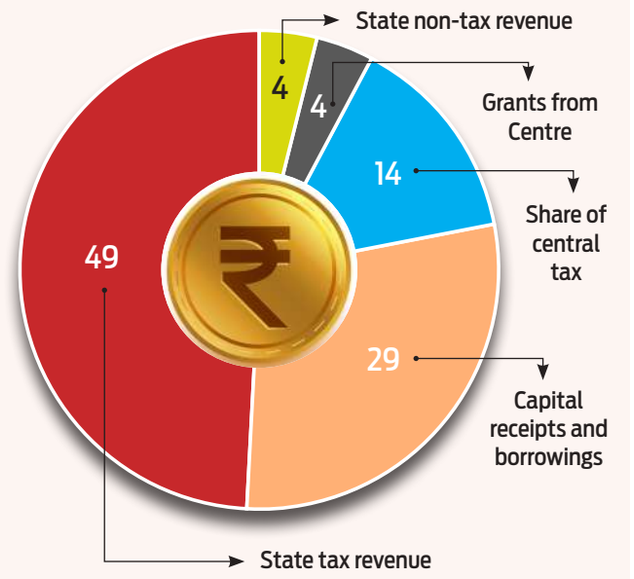
Energy

- ₹19,290 cr for electricity subsidy for 36 lakh irrigation pumpsets.
- ₹10,500 cr to add 3,000 MW solar capacity at Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation substations.
- 100 new KPTCL substations to come up.
- ₹3,400 cr for 2,000 MWh Battery Energy Storage System at Huliyur, Pavagada and Kushtagi.
- ₹777 cr to set up 1,250 electric vehicle charging stations.

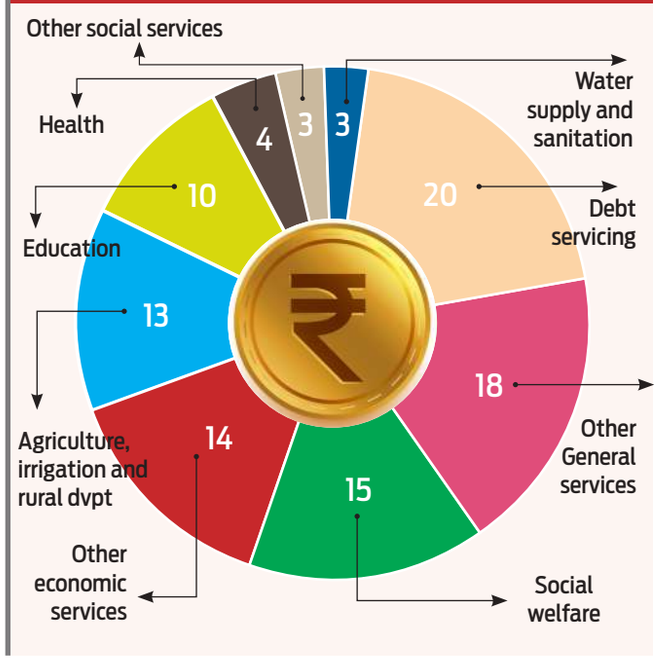
HOW MUCH DOES THE STATE EARN FROM TAXES (RS IN CR)



HOW THE RUPEE COMES (IN PAISA)



WHERE THE RUPEE GOES (IN PAISA)



Namma Budget 2026
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU
SALAR SATURDAY 7 MARCH 2026 4

People bear brunt of financial mismanagement: Oppn

BJP stages 'khaali chombu' protests, says borrowing has increased but it is not being spent on the people

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

As the BJP the staged 'Khaali Chambu' protest saying that the budget presented by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is an empty vessel, which has nothing to offer to people, former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy said that the people will be bear the burden of an economy in disarray.

Describing the budget presented by Siddaramaiah as "harsh on the ears and heavy on the State", he alleged that the Chief Minister chose to indulge in unnecessary criticism of the Union Government instead of sound economic policy.

"In doing so, he (Siddaramaiah) has conveniently ignored the very principles of cooperative federalism while attempting to glorify his own government's flawed model," Kumaraswamy said on X. "I listened to the prolonged budget speech of 'Slogan' Ramaiah... (who) has pushed the State's economy into disarray".

He accused the State government of effectively turning into a patronage centre for

BJP leaders BY Vijayendra and R Ashoka, held 'khaali chombu' (empty vessel) protest outside Vidhana Soudha on Friday, alleging that there was nothing in the Budget
MOHAMMED ASAD

Congress workers, "with public debt being diverted into their pockets".

"The people of Karnataka are now being pushed into a permanent debt trap through this disastrous Budget," Kumaraswamy said. He said one thing is clear: Karnataka's economy is sliding towards a "worrying slowdown".

"Beyond the warnings issued by the CAG and the Reserve Bank, the State now faces a far deeper fiscal risk. The days ahead appear even more challenging, and the people of Karnataka will not forgive this Congress government for such mismanagement," he added.

Kumarswamy pointed out that under the 16th Finance Commission framework, Karnataka's share in Central taxes has increased from 3.61 per cent to 4.7 per cent, which will bring over Rs 11,000 crore additionally to the State.

The State now presents a Budget of Rs 4.48 lakh crore, while the total outstanding debt has already climbed to Rs 8.24 lakh crore.

The debt level has risen from Rs 1.16 lakh crore to Rs 1.32 lakh crore and is almost certain to cross Rs 9 lakh crore next year. The scale of this mounting liability is alarming, he said.

"Borrowing in itself is not the issue, but the question is: what is this debt being used for? If borrowings rise, capital expenditure should rise proportionately," he said.

'THIS IS NOT A BUDGET, IT'S A WISH LIST'

State BJP President BY Vijayendra said on X: "The revenue target for 2026-27 has been set at Rs 3.15 lakh crore, Rs 38,000 crore more than what was actually collected last year. The target that was set in the previous FY was missed by Rs 15,000 crore."

Vijayendra said that the government's borrowing has only increased each year, but it wasn't being allocated anywhere. Noting that borrowing was needed to construct "roads, ports, power plants, assets that generate future revenue and create jobs, (that) eventually pay for themselves" he asked "is this government actually building anything?" He noted that capital expenditure grew by only 4 per cent, the State borrowed 16.5 per cent more.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi described the state budget as a "ticking fiscal bomb".

"The government has admitted a Revenue Deficit of around Rs 22,957 crore (increased from 19,262 crore) meaning Karnataka is borrowing money even to run day-to-day administration. This is financially irresponsible. Karnataka government was a surplus state, Congress government since 2023 (surplus of Rs 13,496 cr)," Joshi said on X.

—Salar News with agencies

> **Instead of strengthening public transport - the most practical solution to Bengaluru's traffic crisis, the Congress Government is pushing ahead with a ₹40,000 crore tunnel road vanity project... Bengaluru urgently needs investments in BMTC expansion, faster Metro and Suburban Rail implementation, and robust last-mile connectivity**
>
>
>
> -Tejasvi Surya, BJP MP

> **They have taken on approximately Rs 1.32 lakh crore in debt, imposed new taxes of about Rs 25,000 crore on the other side, and presented a budget with a Rs 32,000 crore deficit. This directionless budget is dragging the state toward the pit of debt**
>
>
>
> -Basavaraj Bommai, former BJP chief minister

State to integrate AI in agriculture

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Enunciating his vision for a modern AI propelled and digitally vibrant agriculture sector in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday proposed a farmer support system that among other things seeks to provide scientific farming guidance to farmers in the State besides increasing farmers' income.

The Chief Minister announced upgrading of the Farmer Call Centre using AI technology and inclusion of precision sowing and planting machinery under Hi-Tech Harvester Hub Scheme to reduce production costs.

He also proposed promotion of Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD) irrigation in paddy cultivation to improve water efficiency.

He further announced construction of two cold storages (12,000 MT) for horticulture produce at Rs 64 crore and promotion of soil-less culture to conserve water and prevent plant diseases.

In the sericulture sector, the CM proposed increased transportation cost of cocoons grown in North Karnataka to Rs 20/kg for all markets.

Rs 100 crore has been allocated for the Krishi Vistara scheme which aims to strengthen post-harvest activities
SALAR

The CM also proposed to set up CT scanning centres in veterinary colleges besides establishment of Dog Birth Control Training Centres at Bengaluru and Bidar.

Computerisation of 1,628 Primary Agriculture Co-operative Societies (PACS) and management of online data to provide easy access to various public services have also proposed.

As part of his Krishi Vistara scheme to ensure stable and extra income for farmers, Siddaramiah has set aside Rs 100 cr over next three years for strengthening post-harvest activities such as processing, value addition, value chain development, recycling of agricultural waste and also market linkages.

To support the fishing community the State increased of value of Fisheries Requisite Kits from Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000 to ensure quality supply to fishermen and promote sustainable fishing. The kits are government-subsidized packages for fishermen containing equipment like fishing nets. Siddaramaiah stated that fishing link roads in the coastal districts will be developed with the assistance from NABARD at a cost of Rs 30 crore. *—Salar News*

> **Barring the announcement of the usage of artificial intelligence in the agricultural sector and the establishment of cold storage units in places like Davangere & Vijayapura districts for storage of horticulture products, there were no major announcements. Most of the schemes, like providing loans to 38 lakh farmers at zero percent interest rate were all old schemes... The farming community expected relief, but the Budget disappointed them**
>
>
>
> -Kurubur Shanthakumar, State Farmers Federation President and State Sugarcane Growers Association President

Kannada and culture get big boost

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Karnataka Budget 2026 took "Kannada pride" seriously. Karnataka Sahitya Academy will publish children's books with poems of literary giants such as Pampa, Ranna, Janna, Basava.

The State will also celebrate the birth centenary of poet Dr GS Shivarudrappa for which Rs 2 crore was allotted. Events will celebrate his work and literary volumes will be published. A national fellowship will also be started to encourage scholars.

State will soon have a Banjara Encyclopaedia. Havyaka Bhasha academy will be established to strengthen Havyaka language, which is an integral part of Karnataka culture.

The annual 'Bengaluru Habba' will organise theatre, fine arts and sculpture events every year at Rs 5 crore. 'Janapada Sangama' cultural events will showcase folk traditions at Rs 2 crore.

A Chair will be established in the name of Jnanapeetha Awardee Dr UR Ananthamurthy at Kuvempu University.

Books titled 'Anamika Swatantrya Horatagararu' will be published based on the saga of 59 Kannadigas who were part of freedom struggle and were punished in Andaman Island.

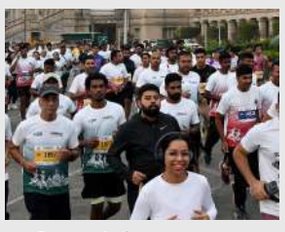
A play based on Na D'Souza's novel 'Kolaga' related to the Kagodu Satyagraha will be performed across the State.

—Salar News

STATE HIKES MSP FOR TUR

The State government will provide an additional Rs 450 over and above the Rs. 7,550 per quintal under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme for the procurement of tur dal, CM said. The government has allocated a total expenditure of Rs 138 crore. CM said that this will benefit farmers in Kalaburagi, Bidar, Yadagir, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Raichur, Koppal, Kolar, Chitradurga and Chikkaballapur.

- Sports Science Centre to be set up in Kalaburagi through Public Private Partnership.



- Sports infrastructure upgrade in Tumakuru with ₹3 crore.

BOOSTING SPORTS FOR ALL

- Sports training residential hostels to be built in Virajpet.
- Districts launch marathons and new cycling velodrome in Mysuru
- District-level marathons in 11 district centres (₹4 lakh each), named after famous athletes.
- Wrestling academy to be established in Belagundi, Belagavi.

- Cycling velodrome to be built in Dattagalli, Mysuru.
- Khelo India Centre of Excellence to be set up under the PPP model.

Balancing out regional imbalance

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

The government said that it was committed to addressing regional imbalances, after the Regional Imbalances Redressal Committee (2026) flagged that nearly 60 per cent of the backward taluks were in North Karnataka.

The State aimed to tackle this by allocating worth Rs. 5,000 crore for formulated for programmes for the development of Kalyana Karnataka region by the KKRDB and announcing a massive industrial park in Belagavi, among other measures. However, Siddaramaiah also provided a bonanza to Mysuru, from announcing the development of an aerospace park, that is, to increase the beds of Jayadeva Hospital from 400 to 600 and to provide Rs 180 crore to the hospital.

KV Suresh Kumar, a trade union leader in Kolar told Salar News that despite the government claiming that Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities would be developed, Kolar has been totally neglected. .

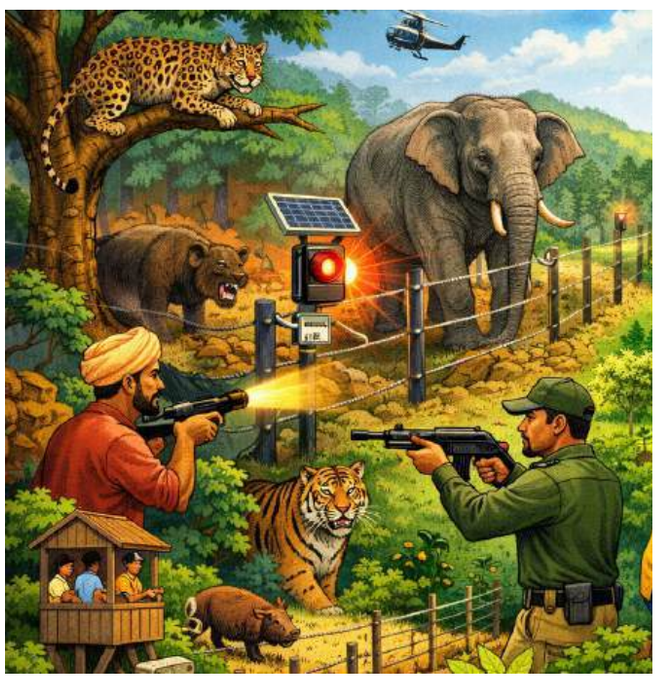
Similarly, M Sridhar Pillai, social activist at KGF told Salar News that although Kolar district has the Asia's second largest tomato market, the government has not sanctioned lands for setting up of a new APMC yard.

"Around 20,000 people are travelling to Bengaluru to earn their bread. The KGF industrial park remains on paper," he said.

"The demand for tertiary treatment of KC Valley water that is being flown to water bodies here has not been met. Even the water supplied under Yeragol project is quite dirty," Kumar added. *—Salar News*

PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT

Rs 15K cr to tackle human-wildlife conflict; forests in focus



The Budget has earmarked Rs 1,500 crore to mitigate human-animal conflict over the next five years, as the government took note of the increase in deaths, particularly in the Malnad region and Bandipur. Rs 269 crore will be spend this financial year.

Over the last three years, the government spent Rs 1,044 crore towards compensation for crop damage, loss of livestock, loss of human life, creation of an elephant task force and leopard task force, installation of a railway barricade, trenching, solar fencing and other protection works.

Siddaramaiah also allocated Rs 150 crore for afforestation works on 75,000 hectares in districts with less than 10 per cent forest cover.

The money will be used for planting trees on a large scale to protect the environment and wild life.

He also said that there would be conservation and development projects at the Greater Hesaraghatta Grassland Conservation Reserve in the Hesaraghatta grassland of Bengaluru and the development of 'Cultural Leader Basavanna Biodiversity Park' at Madappanahalli, Bengaluru.

A Leopard Rehabilitation Centre will come up at Bannerghatta at a cost of Rs 5 crore to protect the big cat so that it increases in numbers and is able to sustain itself in the wild.

Additionally, Siddaramaiah said that the 2,00 vacant Forest Department posts will be filled in 2026-27 so that the department would be able to discharge its duties much more efficiently.

Siddaramaiah also announced the establishment of a Nature Interpretation Centre at the Mysuru Zoo and at the Bannerghatta National Park on Bengaluru city's outskirts. *—Salar News*

PUSH FOR CLEAN AIR

To strengthen the air quality measurement systems, 15 Continuous Ambient Air Quality Measurement Stations will be established. Currently, the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board measures air quality in Bengaluru based on readings from 11 stationary CAAQMS and 13 mobile monitoring stations.

Cruises, heli-taxis, ropeways to attract tourists

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

The coastal districts of Karnataka have unique tourism opportunities, Siddaramaiah stated. A 'Comprehensive Coastal Tourism Development Plan' will be prepared, he said without elaborating.

Connectivity to tourist spots in this area will be increased by providing sea plane and heli-taxi facilities in collaboration with all stakeholders. The state will also encourage joy ride and river cruise schemes.

He said that Rs 1 crore will be spent to train tourist guides, taxi drivers, auto drivers and the police to ensure a pleasant experience for all tourists visiting the State. Soft skill training courses will be developed to enhance the professionalism of major stakeholders.

The State will also start diploma courses in select universities to provide soft skill training to tourist guides.

The Gadag-Kappatagudda-Lakkundi tourism circuit will also be developed.

The government has plans to construct a rope-way connecting tourist locations of Mullayangiri, Seethalayyagiri and Kaimara in Chikmagalur district.

The State will also provide Rs 10 crore for the infrastructure development of Karnataka Exhibition Authority in Mysuru.

1,000 "Smaraka Mitras" to be identified and trained to help protect 844 protected and 1,000 unprotected monuments.

For the convenience of visitors to the Mysore Zoo and Bannerghatta Park, a Nature Interpretation Centre will be established in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode;.

A Centre of Excellence for Kayaking and Canoeing will be established in the Hesaraghatta lake of Bengaluru in PPP model. *—Salar News*

—PTI

Cong MP slams Centre for not helping UAE NRIs

JALNA, 6 MARCH

Jalna Congress MP Kalyan Kale on Friday criticised the Centre for its alleged lack of response and support for Indians stuck in the UAE amid the Iran crisis. Kale, who returned from Dubai on Thursday after being stranded there since 27 February, a day before the joint US-Israel attack on Iran, told reporters that people in the region were in panic after the closing of airspace. "I had sent emails to the Aviation Ministry and the External Affairs Ministry, but there was no response. The government should have held a press conference and assured the people who were stranded abroad and their families back home. Unfortunately, that did not happen," Kale claimed. He appreciated the support extended by the UAE government, saying it provided relief, extended visas and arranged accommodation in hotels. Hotels were also directed not to charge money from those who were stuck, Kale added. "Our hotel was around 10 km away from the US Embassy, which came under attack. Naturally, people were worried," he said. *—PTI*

Man held for teen's murder, cannibalism video

DAMOH, 6 MARCH

A 58-year-old man has been detained for allegedly murdering 16-year-old Bharat Vishwakarma, and a viral video claiming he ate part of the victim's brain and drank his blood. The incident occurred in Sammana village, about 7km from the district centre, when Bharat was riding a motorcycle to get a ceremonial 'tika'. The accused, Gudda Patel, attacked him with an iron rod and hammer, killing him instantly. A relative escaped during the assault. Villagers detained Patel, who fled after the attack. *—PTI*

—ANI

MP siblings on way to exam killed by uncle, son

SEHORE, 6 MARCH

A man and A woman, en route to an exam, were beaten to death by their uncle and his son over land disputes in Sehore district. The victims, Sheetal Malviya, 20, and her brother Kuldeep Malviya, 19, were attacked with sticks in Dharampuri village at about 7.30am. The accused, Harisingh Malviya and his son, intercepted the siblings and killed them. Police confirmed the suspects were related to the victims' father, Jagdish. The suspects have been detained, and the bodies were sent for autopsy. *—PTI*

—PTI

Dharmadhikari sworn in as CJ of Madras HC

CHENNAI, 6 MARCH

Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari was sworn in as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court in a ceremony at the Lok Bhavan. Governor RN Ravi administered the oath of office to Dharmadhikari, who became the 55th Chief Justice. The event was attended by Tamil Nadu Natural Resources Minister S Regupathy, Chief Secretary N Muruganandam, and senior officials. The appointment marks a significant moment for the judiciary in Tamil Nadu, with Justice Dharmadhikari assuming responsibilities as the head of the HC. *—PTI*

Fuel shortage rumours lead to long queues in UP

Officials dismiss shortage reports, warn rumour mongers

LAKHIMPUR KHERI, 6 MARCH

Rumours about a shortage of petroleum products and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) due to the West Asia conflict triggered panic among locals in several areas of Lakhimpur Kheri here, leading to long queues at petrol pumps on Friday, officials said.

Queues of people trying to purchase petrol and diesel were witnessed across several fuel stations in the Nighasan, Pallia and Bhira areas amid fears of a possible shortage.

However, District Supply Officer Anjani Kumar Singh dismissed the rumours as baseless and said there was no shortage of petrol, diesel or LPG in the district.

He also warned of strict action against anyone found hoarding petroleum products.

District Magistrate Durga Shakti Nagpal also took cognisance of the rumours and appealed to people not to panic, assuring that the supply of petrol and diesel in the district was normal.

Rumours about a shortage of petroleum products and LPG due to the West Asia conflict has forced consumers to prepare to face the problem *—PTI*

Kheri Petroleum Traders Association district president Abhishek Dixit emphasised that there was no fuel crisis in the district and sufficient stock was available at petrol pumps to meet consumer demand. Similarly, Arun Kumar Singh, district president of the LPG distributors association, said there was adequate LPG stock in the district and urged residents not to panic.

The Barabanki district administration also dismissed rumours of a fuel shortage circulating on social media and other platforms, with District Magistrate Shashank Tripathi saying the claims about a shortage of petrol and diesel are baseless and misleading.

Tripathi said that adequate stocks of petrol and diesel were available at all fuel stations in the district, and the supply system was functioning normally. The administration was continuously monitoring the situation at petrol pumps, and there was no shortage of fuel anywhere, he said.

He warned that action, including registration of an FIR, would be taken against anyone found spreading rumours about fuel shortage.

Meanwhile, nearly 100 ceramic units have closed in Gujarat's Morbi district due to disruption in fuel supplies. Industry representatives warned that another 400 factories may close soon if supply doesn't normalise.

Manoj Arvadiya, the president of the Morbi Ceramic Manufacturers Association (vitrified tiles division), said the situation could worsen if propane supplies are not restored. *— PTI*

'MODI IS COMPROMISED'

BJP hails US oil waiver, Congress calls it demeaning

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

After the US announced that it is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil, the BJP termed the development as a success of the "strategic oil diplomacy" by Prime Minister Modi, and said it is a "big egg on the face of anti-India Rahul Gandhi and the Congress."

But referring to the US statement that it is issuing a 30-day waiver on Russian oil purchases, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said, "Today's statement by US treasury secretary Scott Bessent indicates that he is doing us a favour by saying that he will give us a 30-day waiver," he said.

The BJP also accused the Congress and Gandhi of creating panic by spreading "fake news on oil shortage."

"Rahul and the Congress hate seeing India act with strategic restraint under Modi," BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said in a post on X.

Meanwhile, with the second half of the budget session set to begin next week, the Congress demanded a discussion on West Asia. The Congress general secretary in-charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh, said the Modi government stands "shrunken and diminished."

Left leaders also questioned the Centre over the US' announcement of a "waiver" to Indian refiners for purchasing Russian oil, terming it as a "humiliation." CPI leader P Sandosh Kumar said in a letter to Modi that India's foreign policy appears to have "drifted away from non-alignment."

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has sought the urgent intervention of Prime Minister Modi for bringing back Indians stranded in Gulf nations. *— PTI*

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader KC Venugopal and others during an interaction with students at

Dead IAF pilot took part in Op Sindoor: Dad

NAGPUR, 6 MARCH

Ravindra Duragkar could only recall memories of his son, Flight Lieutenant Purvesh Duragkar, who took part in Operation Sindhoor. He said the most vivid memory was their phone chat on Wednesday and his visit home 10 days ago for a get-together.

As IAF officials tried to console the retired railway employee at his home in Nagpur's New Subedar Layout, the grief-stricken father occasionally regained his composure to say that Purvesh took immense pride in flying a fighter jet.

Squadron Leader Anuj and Purvesh Duragkar *—PTI*

Squadron Leader Anuj and Flight Lieutenant Purvesh were killed when a Su-30 MKI fighter jet crashed in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, the IAF said on Friday. The jet was on a training sortie and disappeared from radar shortly after taking off from Jorhat airbase on Thursday.

"We had spoken on Wednesday. His Group Captain got in touch with us and informed us about the accident," said Ravindra, his eyes welling up.

His 28-year-old son had taken part in Operation Sindoor, which India launched to target terror bases in Pakistan following last year's Pahalgam attack, he said, adding that Purvesh was deeply committed to his work. Ravindra said Purvesh was originally posted in Tezpur, but was operating from Jorhat as work was being carried out on the Tezpur runway. Purvesh is survived by his parents and a sister settled in the US. Purvesh and his sister, an IITian, had come home 10 days ago for a get-together, the neighbour said.

Purvesh, who did his schooling in Nagpur, was single. Ravindra said his son's body is likely to reach Nagpur in the evening. *— PTI*

Politics now moving towards 'darkness': Rahul

KOLLAM, 6 MARCH

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday that politics and India's international relations were "running towards darkness."

Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha, said that there was no attempt to understand the other person, be it politics or international relations, and violence was resorted to over disagreements.

"Today, we see in our politics, and in international relations, that everyone is running towards darkness. There is no attempt to understand the other person, you just bomb and kill them. It is the same in our politics too. You don't agree with someone, and you attack that person," he alleged.

He was speaking at an event here commemorating the centenary of a meeting between Mahatma Gandhi and reformist saint Sree Narayana Guru.

- Rahul said that both Mahatma Gandhi and Narayana Guru were against violence and advocated love, forgiveness and understanding between people. He added that it is a challenge to follow the teachings of Narayana Guru

He said that both the Mahatma and Narayana Guru were against violence and advocated love, respect, forgiveness and understanding between people.

Rahul further said that it was easy for anyone to place flowers in tribute before the statue or image of Narayana Guru, but the challenge was to follow his teachings.

He said it was a great honour for him to come here and he bowed his head to both Narayana Guruji and Mahatma Gandhi. *— PTI*

India, Finland renew MoU on green cooperation

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

India and Finland have renewed their MoU on environmental cooperation to deepen collaboration on pollution prevention and control, waste management, climate change, forests and natural resource management, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said.

The renewal of the MoU comes during the four-day visit of Finnish President Alexander Stubb. Officials said the MoU will provide a structured framework for collaboration and exchange of best practices between the two countries on, inter alia, prevention and control of air and water pollution; waste management (including hazardous waste, and recycling).

It will also cover circular economy and low-carbon solutions in the use of natural resources and forests; climate change mitigation and adaptation; environmental and forest monitoring (including data management). *— PTI*

JD(U) workers continue to protest Nitish Kumar's RS move

PATNA, 6 MARCH

JD(U) workers continued to protest on Friday the decision of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to enter the Rajya Sabha, a move seen as signalling the end of his than two-and-a-half-decade-long stint in Bihar politics.

At the JD(U) office here, situated right across the street from the BJP's state headquarters, party workers staged a demonstration alleging that "traitors" had hatched a "conspiracy" with the alliance partner to "get rid of" their leader, who had been an eyesore for the "powerful liquor lobby."

"There are some people in our party who are playing the role of Jaichand (12th-century Rajput chieftain who aided Afghan invader Muhammad Ghori). One is in the Union cabinet, and the other has come from the BJP and is lording over us now," an irate JD(U) worker alleged.

The allusion was to Union minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan, an old aide of Nitish Kumar and a former party president, and Sanjay Kumar Jha, the JD(U)'s working president, who had started as a BJP youth wing worker in the 1990s.

Notably, the party had announced a couple of days ago that Nitish Kumar, who had been averse to "dynasty politics," had agreed to launch his only son, in a move that is seen as an attempt to prevent the party from disintegration after the supreme leader, who turned 75 last week, hangs up his boots. *— PTI*

'Modi made Nitish a Maduro'

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday took a swipe at the BJP over Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's decision to move to the Rajya Sabha, saying what US President Donald Trump did to then Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in January, Prime Minister Modi has now done to the JD(U) chief.

He also said that Chief Minister Kumar's decision to step down is a betrayal of the electoral mandate. Ramesh said the people of the state voted for Kumar's re-election and not for a BJP chief minister. — PTI

DAM ON ZUARI RIVER

Anti-dam protest in Assembly terrorist-like, says Goa CM

PANAJI, 6 MARCH

Four people were detained on Friday after they staged a protest from the visitors' gallery in the Goa assembly on the opening day of the budget session, over the proposed dam on the Zuari River.

The protest drew criticism from Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who called the disruption a "terrorist kind of attitude." The protest begun soon after the 17-day budget session of the state assembly began at 11.30 am. Four persons sitting in the visitors' gallery started shouting slogans and displayed placards.

The protesters were part of the agitation against the proposed dam on the Zuari River at Mirabag village in Kushawati district, where villagers have been staging a sit-in for the last 25 days against the project. Amid the sloganeering, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant told the House that the protesters should be arrested immediately.

"We can't tolerate this behaviour in the House. This is a terrorist kind of attitude. You are doing this now, tomorrow you may even fire bullets," he said, even as commotion continued for a few minutes in the House.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who also holds the Finance portfolio, presents the state Budget in the Goa Legislative Assembly *—PTI*

Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai said the protesters had reached the House after the government refused to give them a hearing.

Assembly marshals immediately swung into action, detaining the four protesters.

The House resumed the usual business after the protesters were removed from the gallery. Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) MLA Sudin Dhavalikar demanded strict action against the protesters. — PTI

Andhra to ban social media for children under 13

AMARAVATI, 6 MARCH

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said on Friday that social media access will be prohibited for children below 13 within the next 90 days in the state.

Addressing the Assembly, the Chief Minister said they are actively debating whether to extend this ban to all children between 13 and 16 years of age.

"Definitely, we will make sure that within the next 90 days those below 13 are not able to use social media," said Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu.

The Chief Minister said his government will take a decision soon on banning access to social media platforms for teenagers aged between 13 and 16 years. *— PTI*

Mamata begins sit-in against voter deletions

KOLKATA, 6 MARCH

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee began a sit-in here on Friday to protest against the alleged arbitrary deletions from the post-SIR electoral rolls, escalating the TMC's confrontation with the Election Commission.

Launching the dharna at Kolkata's Esplanade Metro Channel, Banerjee accused the BJP and the Election Commission of conspiring to "disenfranchise Bengali voters" and vowed to expose them. She also alleged that several voters had been wrongly marked as deceased in the revised electoral rolls. "I will present those voters, who have been declared dead by the EC at this protest site," Banerjee said.

The sit-in, which started from 2.15 pm was announced earlier by TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, who had accused the poll panel of carrying out a "politically motivated" exercise that could disenfranchise lakhs of voters.

The protest marks a sharp escalation by the TMC, days after the EC published the post-SIR electoral rolls, which have significantly altered the contours of the electorate.

- Launching the dharna at Kolkata's Esplanade Metro Channel, Mamata accused the BJP and the ECI of conspiring to "disenfranchise Bengali voters" and vowed to expose them

Official data released on 28 February says that 63.66 lakh names — around 8.3 per cent of the electorate — have been deleted after SIR began in November 2025, reducing the voter base from about 7.66 crore to just over 7.04 crore.

In addition, over 60.06 lakh electors have been placed under the "under adjudication" category, meaning their eligibility will be determined through legal scrutiny in the coming weeks. *— PTI*

RSP heads to landslide victory in Nepal

Balen was popular choice to lead interim govt, but decided to contest polls for a full term

KHATMANDU, 6 MARCH

In yet another change of government, rapper-turned-politician **Balendra Shah**'s newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) is heading towards a sweeping victory in Nepal's first general elections since the violent Gen Z protests last September.

Popularly known as 'Balen', the 35-year-old engineer is expected to be the next prime minister of Nepal, reflecting a public mood of rejection of established parties. Nepal has had 14 governments in the last 18 years.

According to information reaching here, the Nepali Congress has won two seats and is leading in 13 others, while the CPN-UML is leading in 10 constituencies. The Nepali Communist Party has won one and is leading in six constituencies. The Shram Sanskriti Party is leading in six constituencies. The RSP, on the other hand, has won three seats and is ahead in 104 others in a total of 165 constituencies that went to elections.

- Balendra Shah, popularly known as 'Balen', is a 35-year-old engineer turned rapper turned mayor. He is expected to be the next prime minister of Nepal, reflecting a public mood of rejection of established parties culminating with last year's Gen Z protest. Nepal has had 14 governments in the last 18 years.

Balen was a popular choice to lead the interim government after Gen Z youths toppled the Oli-led coalition government in September last year, following two days of nationwide violent protests against corruption, and a ban on social media.

He, however, declined to lead the interim administration, saying he would rather head the government by contesting the parliamentary polls for a full term.

In January, Balen joined the RSP, which was formed in 2022 by Ravi Lamichhane, and was soon declared the party's prime ministerial candidate. The RSP received significant support during the campaign.

Nepal witnessed about 60 per cent voter turnout during the elections to the House of Representatives on Thursday. The counting of votes started late Thursday night and is expected to be completed by Friday night, according to the Election Commission. Nepal's 18.9 million voters were eligible to elect 275 members of the House of Representatives. Around 3,400 candidates are vying for 165 seats under direct voting, and 3,135 candidates for 110 seats through proportionate voting.

The Gen Z youth, through their two-day intensified protests on September 8 and 9, ousted Prime Minister Oli, who was heading a coalition government with the backing of Nepali Congress that enjoyed nearly two-thirds majority support.

After Oli's ouster, President Ramchandra Paudel dissolved the House of Representatives on 12 September and appointed Sushila Karki as the interim prime minister. *—PTI*

—FREEPIK

Indonesia to ban social media for for children under 16

JAKARTA, 6 MARCH

Indonesia will ban social media for children under 16, Communication and Digital Affairs Minister Meutya Hafid said Friday. Hafid, in a statement to media, said that she just signed a government regulation that will mean children under the age of 16 can no longer have accounts on high-risk digital platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X, Bigo Live and Roblox. The implementation will start gradually from 28 March, until all platforms fulfil their compliance obligations. Earlier this week, Indonesia's Ministry conducted a inspection on Meta's Jakarta office over concerns about the handling of harmful content on its platforms. Indonesia will be the first country in Southeast Asia to restrict the access of children to social media. *—PTI*

Axel Springer to buy Telegraph Media for $766M

LONDON, 6 MARCH

German media group Axel Springer has agreed to buy the owner of Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper for 575 million pounds (USD 766 million), the companies announced Friday. The agreement ends a long saga over ownership of the Telegraph Media Group, which publishes the 171-year-old Daily Telegraph and its Sunday sister paper. Axel Springer CEO Mathias Döpfner said it will invest in the group "to enable it to become the leading centre-right media outlet in the English-speaking world." The German company owns a portfolio of media brands, including Bild, Business Insider, Politico and Welt and has a stated mission to "become the leading digital publisher of AI empowered media across the free world." *—Agencies*

Islamic militants abduct over 300 people in Nigeria

ABUJA, 6 MARCH

Islamic militants attacked a town in northeastern Nigeria on Friday, abducting more than 300 people, including women and children, local officials said. The attack happened in the town of Ngoshe in Borno state, according to Bulama Sawa, an official from the Gwoza area. He told The Associated Press the attack was likely in retaliation for an operation by the military that killed three commanders of the militant Boko Haram group. Separate attacks also took place in the communities of Konduga, Marte, Jakana, and Mainok between Wednesday and early Friday, according to a military spokesperson. The spokesperson, Uba Sani , said the troops were able to repel the attacks on Konduga, Marte, Jakana and Mainok, but "a number of brave soldiers paid the supreme price in the line of duty," along with a senior officer. Sani described the assaults as "failed attacks" and "increasing desperation of terrorist elements under operational pressure across the theatre." *—PTI*

Don says 'no deal' as Iran strikes US bases in UAE, Qatar

TEHRAN/ TEL AVIV/ WASHINGTON, 6 MARCH

Israeli warplanes pounded the capitals of Beirut and Tehran on Friday as Iran launched a new wave of retaliatory strikes against Israel and several Gulf states, marking the seventh day of an intensifying regional conflict with no sign of easing.

Amid the escalation, US President Donald Trump declared there would be "no deal with Iran except unconditional surrender".

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said negotiations could only take place once Iran's leadership capitulates and is replaced by "great and acceptable leaders", adding that the United States would help rebuild the country afterward under the slogan "Make Iran Great Again (MIGA)".

Trump also suggested he wanted a role in selecting Iran's next supreme leader after the reported death of Ali Khamenei in a US–Israeli strike last week.

Speaking to Axios, he dismissed the possible succession of Mojtaba Khamenei as "unacceptable", describing him as a "lightweight" and saying Iran needed a leader capable of bringing "harmony and peace".

Iranian authorities have not yet announced a successor, though signals from Tehran suggest a decision could come soon. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi struck a defiant tone, saying Tehran would not negotiate with the US and had not requested a ceasefire. Asked about the possibility of a US ground invasion, he said: "We are waiting for them... we are confident we can confront them."

Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh, Beirut's southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon *—PTI*

The war has now spread to more than a dozen countries across West Asia. The US military said it struck the Iranian drone carrier IRIS Shahid Bagheri, setting it ablaze at sea. The vessel, a converted container ship with a 180M runway for drones, can reportedly travel 22,000 nautical miles without refuelling.

Admiral Brad Cooper said B-2 stealth bombers had also dropped dozens of 2,000-pound bunker-buster bombs on underground Iranian missile launch sites. Israel said it had begun a "broad-scale wave of strikes" on Tehran, while explosions were also reported near missile bases in Kermanshah.

Iran meanwhile launched missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf states hosting US forces, including Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Air defences in the United Arab Emirates intercepted nine ballistic missiles and 109 drones, while Qatar said it thwarted a drone attack on Al Udeid Air Base.

In Israel, explosions were heard in Tel Aviv as air defence systems intercepted incoming missiles. The conflict has already killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, more than 120 in Lebanon and around a dozen in Israel. Six US troops have also died.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said some countries had begun mediation efforts, while the UN human rights chief Volker Türk urged immediate de-escalation.

The war has triggered a surge in oil prices. CEO of Qatar Petroleum Saad al Kaabi warned the conflict could "bring down the economies of the world" if Gulf energy exports are disrupted, saying prices could climb to USD150 a barrel after a drone strike damaged Qatar's largest liquefied natural gas plant. *—PTI*

4 IRANIAN 'SPIES' HELD IN LONDON

London police arrested four men on suspicion of aiding Iran by spying on the Jewish community. One Iranian and three British-Iranian nationals were arrested on suspicion of assisting a foreign intelligence service by allegedly spying on north London and individuals, police said. Six other men were also arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender and have been taken into custody, the force said.

US' GULF ALLIES ARE DISCONTENT

The Trump administration is confronting mounting discontent from allies in the Persian Gulf who have complained they were not given adequate time to prepare. . Officials from two Gulf countries said their governments were disappointed in the way the US has handled the initial attack. The governments of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE did not respond to requests for comment.

DON FOR KURDISH ATTACK ON IRAN

US President Donald Trump says he'd be 'all for' Kurdish ground assault on Iran amid reports that Washington is egging on rebellion. Trump however declined to say whether the US would provide air support for Kurdish rebels. The Kurdistan Regional Government has denied reports that it is going to become a part of the campaign against Iran.

SOUTH KOREA SILENT ON US ASSETS

South Korea's foreign minister, Cho Hyun, declined to comment on reports that the US might relocate some military assets amid West Asia tensions, stating that he could not confirm details of US military operations. Cho said Seoul and Washington maintain close communication and their defence posture remains unaffected. US Forces Korea also refrained from commenting on specific military movements for operational security reasons.

Death toll in Lebanon surpasses 100

BEIRUT, 6 MARCH

More than 100 people in Lebanon have been killed and at least 638 others wounded in Israeli attacks since the onset of the latest conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, Lebanon's health ministry said.

The rising toll comes amid a new wave of Israeli strikes, with Lebanese state media reporting on Friday that Israel had launched air strikes on several towns in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah has warned Israeli residents to evacuate towns along the northern border, in one of the fiercest fronts in the wider US-Israel war on Iran. Israel, however, said it will not evacuate its border towns and has sent additional soldiers into Lebanon, calling it a defensive measure to protect nearby citizens. In contrast, Tens of thousands of Lebanese have fled their homes, according to state-run NNA.

Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh, Beirut's southern suburbs, in Lebanon *—PTI*

> **Dahiey (in Beirut) will look like Khan Younis (in Gaza)**
> -Bezalel Smotrich - Israeli Finance Minister

The ongoing conflict in Lebanon is part of a broader West Asia regional escalation, following joint US-Israeli strikes on Iran. Iran's strategy aims to leverage the fear of a widening war to force international intervention and pressure Washington to halt its military campaign. However, this strategy carries a significant risk of backfiring, as these attacks have alienated regional neighbours and pushed them closer to the US security umbrella. *—Agencies*

After Iran, Trump threatens Cuba gov

WASHINGTON, 6 MARCH

US President Donald Trump on Thursday said that once his administration completes its war against Iran, he plans to topple Cuba's government.

"We want to finish this one [Iran] first," Trump said. "But that will be just a question of time."

After the US abducted Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in January, Trump stated that the country's supply of oil to Cuba is an essential economic lifeline for the island that has been under heavy US sanctions for years, and would be totally cut off.

While threatening Cuba, Trump also praised Secretary of State Marco Rubio for his "fantastic job" on Cuba.

This is a reference to the the intensified sanctions on the island — fueling a US-led fuel blockade that has triggered a severe energy crisis across Cuba. *—Agencies*

ISRAELI SETTLERS 'SIEGE' WEST BANK

Israeli settler violence in the occupied West Bank has increased since the Iran war erupted. Between Saturday and Tuesday, there have been 50 instances of documented settler violence in 37 Palestinian communities , including shootings, assaults and property damage. That includes Israeli settlers who shot dead two Palestinian brothers in the West Bank. An ambulance couldn't reach them due to Israeli gates and checkpoints.

US MISSILE HITS 2 SCHOOLS IN IRAN

Two Iranian schools in the town of Parand Southwest of Tehran, were allegedly hit by the missiles fired by the United States. The attack, which happened on Thursday, left classrooms and several nearby residential units damaged.
This comes six days after an attack occurred on a girls' school in the southern Iranian city of Minab, which killed 165 students and staff. On the very same day, the US and Israel had launched their military campaign against Iran. Authorities said that most of the people who died in the attack were girls aged seven to 12. At least 95 others were said to be injured in the attack.

TRUMP FIRES DHS SECRETARY AMID LEADERSHIP CRITICISM

WASHINGTON, 6 MARCH

US President Donald Trump fired his embattled Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary, **Kristi Noem**, on Thursday. Trump announced on social media that he will replace Noem and nominate Oklahoma Republican Sen Markwayne Mullin to head the Department in her place.

Frustrations over Noem's execution of Trump's hard-line immigration agenda — particularly her leadership after the deaths of US citizens in Minneapolis by ICE agents — led to criticism over her leadership.

Noem is the first Cabinet secretary to leave during Trump's second term. Trump said he will instead appoint her as special envoy for his planned "Shield of the Americas" security initiative.

The announcement comes two days after Noem's contentious testimony on Tuesday before the Senate Judiciary Committee. She was grilled over her department's handling of the administration's immigration crackdown, drawing rare but blistering criticism from Republicans.

Central to the criticism was a USD 220 million ad campaign featuring Noem urging undocumented immigrants to leave the US. While she testified that Trump approved it, he told Reuters on Thursday that he never signed off on the ad.

Under her, the DHS has been shut down for 20 days, although many of the employees are continuing to work, often without pay. *—PTI*

EPSTEIN FILES

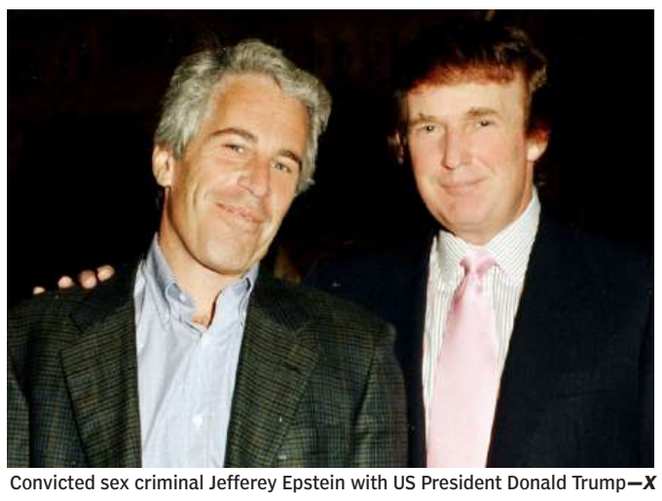
Trump accused of sexually assaulting a minor

WASHINGTON, 6 MARCH

The US Justice Department (DOJ) has released additional files related to convicted sex criminal Jeffrey Epstein, including allegations that US President Donald Trump sexually assaulted a minor between 13 and 15 years, in the 1980s.

American media outlets have noted the notable absence of specific memos from 2019 FBI interviews with a woman who levelled these accusations against the President.

The newly released Epstein documents came days after The Wall Street Journal reported that more than 40,000 previously public files were missing from the DOJ website. A DOJ spokesperson said 47,635 files were taken offline for review and will likely be republished.



Convicted sex criminal Jefferey Epstein with US President Donald Trump—*X*

The accuser was interviewed four times in 2019 by the FBI. According to the documents, the woman alleged that she was sexually assaulted by both Epstein and Trump while she was between 13 and 15 years old.

In one interview, the woman said Epstein took her to "either New York or New Jersey" and introduced her to Trump. She told investigators that she bit Trump as he allegedly forced her to perform oral sex and then hit her before ordering her removed from the room.

The woman said she and people close to her had received threatening calls over the years demanding she keep quiet, which she believed were related to Epstein.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing related to the Epstein allegations, and the Justice Department previously said some of the documents it has released "contain untrue and sensationalist claims against President Trump."

Democrats have accused the Trump administration of covering up the Epstein investigation. *—Agencies*

Adani Total Gas prices unchanged amid supply curbs

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Adani Total Gas Ltd (ATGL) has kept prices for CNG and domestic piped natural gas (PNG) unchanged, despite imposing supply restrictions on some large industrial consumers amid the West Asia crisis, officials said on Friday. About 70 per cent of ATGL's gas is sourced domestically and supplied to CNG users and households, with prices remaining steady. The remaining 30 per cent, imported as LNG, supplies commercial and industrial clients. Due to supply chain disruptions, commercial and industrial customers are asked to reduce consumption to 40 per cent of their contracted volumes, with billing remaining at contracted rates for this limit. The average contracted price is around Rs 40 per standard cubic metre (scm). Additional gas beyond 40 per cent will be charged Rs 119 per scm. *—PTI*

Gold declines to ₹1.64L/10g; Silver slips to ₹2.71L/kg

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Gold prices declined Rs 1,100 to Rs 1.64 lakh per 10g in the national capital on Friday as traders booked profits at elevated levels for the second straight session, while silver also slipped to Rs 2.71 lakh per kg. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated Rs 1,100, or nearly 1 per cent, to Rs 1,64,100 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). Silver also fell Rs 600 to Rs 2,71,700 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) in bullion market. However, in the international markets, bullion prices were trading higher on renewed safe-haven demand, with spot gold gaining USD 14.70, or 0.29 per cent, to USD 5,095.81 per ounce, while silver increasing 1.4 per cent to USD 83.40 per ounce. *—PTI*

Rupee ends 6P lower at 91.70 against USD

MUMBAI, 6 MARCH

The rupee stayed range-bound throughout the session on Friday and ended 6 paise lower at 91.70 (provisional) against the US dollar, resisting pressure from inflated crude oil prices and suspected RBI intervention. According to forex experts, heavy selling in domestic equities and withdrawal of foreign funds further dragged the rupee down. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at its previous session's closing level of 91.64 against the greenback and moved in a narrow range between an intra-day high of 91.54 and a low of 91.78 during the session. At the end, the rupee settled at 91.70 (provisional) against the US dollar. *—PTI*

Flipkart cuts nearly 300 jobs in annual review

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

E-commerce major Flipkart has trimmed its workforce by 250-300 employees following its annual performance review, sources familiar with the matter said on Friday. The job cuts, which span multiple departments and employee levels, come as the Walmart-backed firm continues senior-level hiring ahead of its planned initial public offering. Sources, however, pegged the number between 250 and 300. In December 2025, the company received a nod from the National Company Law Tribunal to shift its legal domicile from Singapore to India. The restructuring is aimed at simplifying the group's holding structure and involves the merger of eight Singapore-based entities into Flipkart Internet Pvt Ltd to align with Indian regulatory requirements. *—PTI*

Morgan Stanley downgrades Indian mkt to equal weight

NEW YORK, 6 MARCH

Amid fears of disruptions in the supply chain in the wake of the ongoing war between the US and Iran, Morgan Stanley has downgraded the Indian stock market if the oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz, being controlled by Iran, are unable to recover, according to Morgan Stanley.

According to the brokerage, India is likely to be the most exposed to the disruption of liquefied natural gas supply from Qatar. This has led Morgan Stanley to downgrade the Indian stock market to equal-weight on oil supply risks in their latest reshuffling.

"We stay defensive, Asia remains critically dependent on West Asia supply of crude oil, refined products and LNG, and we believe the market is too complacent about supply chain risks," Morgan Stanley strategists, including Daniel Blake and Jonathan Garner, wrote in a note dated 5 March, a Bloomberg report said.

According to the news agency's report said, global investors are pulling money out of emerging Asia's major markets.

Foreign investors have pulled about $1.3 billion from India since the war began. Chip- driven markets of Taiwan and South Korea have seen even larger outflows of $7.9 billion and $1.6 billion, respectively this week.

The ongoing war between Iran and the US has reshaped the energy flows and risk premiums, especially amid disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20 per cent of global oil flows and over 40 per cent of India's crude imports transit. *—Agencies*

Govt invokes emergency powers, ups LPG output

India has around 33.08 crore active LPG consumers

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

The government invoked sparingly used emergency powers to direct oil refineries to ramp up LPG production as it looks to increase the availability of domestic cooking gas to hedge against potential disruptions from the widening Middle East conflict.

India consumed 31.3 million tonnes of LPG in 2024-25, of which only 12.8 million tonnes were produced domestically, with the remainder imported. Imports have become increasingly vulnerable as 85-90 per cent come from countries like Saudi Arabia that rely on the narrow but critical Strait of Hormuz for transit.

The Strait has been effectively blocked following a week-old escalation in the region, after US and Israeli strikes on Iran prompted Tehran to retaliate against US bases in neighbouring countries.

While India has surplus oil refining capacity, it is short in LPG production. And now all public and private sector refiners have been asked to "maximise and ensure that propane and butane streams produced... are utilised for production of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)," according to an oil ministry order of 5 March.

LPG is a mixture of propane and butane.

The order, issued under the powers derived from the Essential Commodities Act of 1955 (popularly called ESMA), asked the refiners to make such LPG produced available to three public sector oil marketing companies — Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) only.

The refiners have also been barred from using the two chemicals for producing petrochemicals.

"All oil refining companies shall not divert, utilise, process, crack, convert or otherwise employ propane or butane stream for the manufacture of petrochemical products or other such downstream derivatives," the order said.

The LPG so produced is to be sold only to domestic households for use in cooking purposes, it said, adding any contravention of the order shall attract penal action.

India has 33.08 crore active LPG consumers, and the government is looking to maintain an uninterrupted supply.

Earlier, the government invoked ESMA provisions in the oil sector during the post-Ukraine war period, asking refiners to ensure domestic fuel availability and not to export, which had become lucrative due to high margins. *—PTI*

WITH 60% PERISHABLES

Kochi air cargo movement hit by West Asia war

KOCHI, 6 MARCH

The ongoing conflict in West Asia has affected the movement of air cargo from Kochi that has more than halved now, CIAL officials said on Friday.

Perishables are the worst hit and a special cargo flight from Abu Dhabi is set to land here to clear the consignment, they said.

Authorities of Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) said the situation is expected to improve as more flights have resumed operations in recent days, following disruptions caused by the Gulf conflict.

The special cargo flight from Abu Dhabi is scheduled to arrive at CIAL on Saturday to transport perishable goods.

Around 88 tonnes of goods, a majority of which belong to the Lulu Group, will be moved via the special cargo flight, they said.

Satheesh Kumar Pai, Head of Department of the CIAL cargo section, said that the city airport serves as the hub of air cargo operations in Kerala. He said the Gulf region accounts for a major share of cargo movement from Kerala, including transit shipments to Europe and other Western countries.

"Before the conflict, we used to send an average of 150 tonnes of goods as cargo per day. That has come down to 60 tonnes a day now," he said.

Around 60 per cent of the cargo sent from the airport consisted of perishable goods, Pai added.

"It was around 90–100 tonnes per day. However, due to the conflict, the movement of perishable goods, including fruits and vegetables, has come down heavily," he said. *—PTI*

Modi calls for making agri products export-ready

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** on Friday stressed the importance of making Indian agricultural products export-oriented and globally competitive.

Speaking at a post-budget webinar on 'Agriculture and Rural Transformation', Modi urged farmers to utilise India's diverse climate to boost productivity and exports.

He emphasised the need for a "unified approach involving experts, industry, and farmers to meet global quality and branding standards", and highlighted the importance of connecting local farmers with international markets.

"Today the world markets are opening, and global demand is shifting... It is necessary to have more discussion on making our agriculture export-oriented. We have a diverse climate, and we must take full advantage of it. We are rich in agro-climatic zones," he said.

The 2026-27 Budget prioritises high-value crops such as cashew, cocoa, and sandalwood, along with missions on edible oil, pulses, and natural farming.

He called for scaling high-value agriculture to transform India into a globally competitive sector. *—PTI*

ED raids entities linked to Reliance Power

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted searches at multiple locations in Mumbai and Hyderabad as part of an investigation against entities linked to Reliance Power Ltd., a group company of businessman Anil Ambani, officials said.

According to information furnished by the ED to the Supreme Court, it has filed three money laundering cases against the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG) to investigate charges of bank loan fraud and other financial irregularities.

Reliance Power denied that the federal probe agency raided any of its offices or premises.

About 10-12 locations linked to the said company and its executives are being searched in Mumbai and Hyderabad, the officials said. *—PTI*

2,304 STOCKS DECLINE

Sensex, Nifty dive over 1% amid boiling crude prices

MUMBAI, 6 MARCH

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled over 1 per cent on Friday after a day's breather as the conflict in the Middle East entered the seventh day, driving crude oil prices higher.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,097 points, or 1.37 per cent, to settle at 78,918.90. During the day, it sank 1,203.72 points, or 1.50 per cent, to 78,812.18.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 315.45 points, or 1.27 per cent, to end at 24,450.45.

Weakness in US equities, subdued trend in European markets and relentless foreign fund outflows also dampened investor sentiment, analysts said.

From the Sensex pack, Eternal, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, and Larsen & Toubro were among the major laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.53 per cent to USD 87.57 per barrel.

The BSE midcap select index dropped 1.10 per cent and smallcap select index dipped 0.43 per cent.

BSE top 10 banks tanked 2.37 per cent, private banks index by 2.25 per cent, bankex by 2.14 per cent, financial services by 2.12 per cent, BSE PSU bank by 1.99 per cent and services by 1.35 per cent.

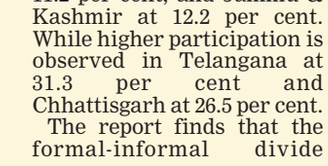
A total of 2,304 stocks declined while 1,895 advanced and 175 remained unchanged on the BSE. *—PTI*

WORLD MARKETS

DOW (US)	47,058.50	(1.84%)
S&P 500 (US)	6,745.01	(1.56%)
Nasdaq (US)	22,485.87	(1.27%)
Nikkei (Japan)	55,620.84	(0.62%)
Hang Seng (China)	25,757.30	(1.72%)
DAX (Germany)	23,391.65	(1.78%)
FTSE 100 (UK)	10,242.60	(1.65%)
CAC 40 (Paris)	7,939.76	(1.32%)
KOSPI (South Korea)	5,584.87	(0.02%)

FMCG growth slows in Dec quarter amid GST transition

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH



FMCG sales growth slowed to 7.8 per cent in the December quarter of 2025, according to NielsenIQ, due to GST rationalisation and a high base from festival season sales.

Volume growth also declined to 2.6 per cent, the lowest in 2025.

The moderation reflects a higher festive base last year and transitional GST adjustments.

Modern trade recorded a three-fold growth acceleration versus the previous quarter, with e-commerce sales reaching 18 per cent in the top 8 metros. Rural markets continued to outpace urban consumption for the eighth consecutive quarter, with rural growth at 2.9 per cent and urban at 2.3 per cent.

E-commerce now accounts for 18 per cent of FMCG sales in top metros. *—PTI*

Rupee, inflation risks likely from energy disruption: Moody's

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

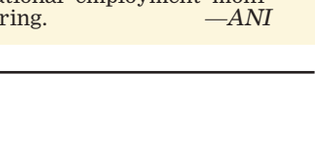
India could face pressure on the rupee, higher inflation and a widening current account deficit if the escalating West Asia conflict spikes energy prices and disrupts supplies, given its heavy dependence on crude and LNG imports from the region, according to Moody's Ratings.

The country imports about 46 per cent of its oil and natural gas requirements from West Asia. Supplies from the region have been disrupted as the widening West Asia conflict has blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a key conduit for crude oil and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), exports from the region.

Moody's said West Asia conflict poses substantial risk to the global economy, particularly if it causes prolonged disruption in global energy markets.

Energy-importing regions in Asia and Europe would sustain the most immediate stress from $100-plus Brent crude.

In its baseline scenario, Moody's assumes the conflict will be relatively short-lived and navigation through the Strait of Hormuz will resume soon. *—PTI*



79% OF YOUNG MEN

Only 18% of young women in India have paid jobs: Report

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Only 18 per cent of young women in India aged 20-29 are in paid employment compared to nearly 79 per cent of young men, despite achieving near gender parity in higher education.

A new white paper by the Centre for Finance & Economics Research (CFER) at Great Lakes Institute of Management reveals that fewer than half of young adults are employed, with women's low participation acting as the primary driver of interstate variation.

The study, titled 'Young Adults at Work in India: Intense Work for Some, Insufficient Jobs for Many', draws on data from India's nationwide Time Use Survey (TUS) 2024.

The report reveals that in several large states, fewer than one in ten young women are employed. Female employment participation is particularly low in Bihar at 6.9 per cent, Uttar Pradesh at 9.8 per cent, Uttarakhand at 11.2 per cent, and Jammu & Kashmir at 12.2 per cent. While higher participation is observed in Telangana at 31.3 per cent and Chhattisgarh at 26.5 per cent.

The report finds that the formal-informal divide affects women far more severely than men. Young men's daily work hours change by only 28 minutes between formal and informal enterprises.

For young women, work hours collapse from 6 hours 50 minutes in formal enterprises to 4 hours 53 minutes in informal ones.

The study also documents an invisible burden where young women in paid work face a total work time of 9 hours 31 minutes once unpaid care is included, exceeding men's total by over 90 minutes.

To address these gaps, the white paper recommends four interconnected interventions:

First, removing binding constraints to women's employment by reducing housing, transport, and safety barriers, and expanding institutional housing such as working women's hostels.

Second, accelerating formalisation through simplified regulatory compliance, portable social protection, and rural formal-enterprise infrastructure.

Third, addressing overwork and spatial mismatch by co-locating affordable housing with employment centres and investing in public transport with safe last-mile connectivity.

Fourth, tackling underemployment through expanded market linkages, structured pathways from informal to formal work via skill certification, and the integration of time-use metrics into national employment monitoring. *—ANI*

Australia edge Day One of Test against India

Jemimah provided strongest resistance for India

MELBOURNE, 6 MARCH

Jemimah Rodrigues playing a shot against Australia –PTI

Australia claimed a slim advantage in its one-off Test against India at the WACA Ground in Perth after closing the day 102 runs behind with seven wickets in hand on a frantic opening day on which thirteen wickets fell.

Australia skipper Alyssa Healy opted to bowl first after winning the toss in her final international match, and the move paid early dividends as debutant Lucy Hamilton bowled Smriti Mandhana for just four to claim her maiden Test wicket.

Shafali Verma and Pratika Rawal (one of four debutants for India alongside Kashvee Gautam, Kranti Gaud, and Sayali Satghare) rallied briefly to move the scoreboard past fifty, but Annabel Sutherland induced a nick behind from Shafali to trigger India's slide. The lanky all-rounder claimed three of her four wickets as India slipped to 107 for five during the first session.

Jemimah Rodrigues provided the strongest resistance for India, scoring her fourth Test half-century and adding 43 with Richa Ghosh. However, both batters fell in consecutive overs, and Kashvee Gautam's unbeaten 34 could only delay the inevitable as India was bowled out for 198.

Along with Sutherland's four-wicket haul, Hamilton claimed three wickets and Darcie Brown two.

That India remains alive in the game can be attributed to an incisive spell of new-ball bowling in which Sayali and Kranti both claimed their maiden Test wickets. Sayali bowled Georgia Voll a peach that swung from outside off-stump to hit leg-stump, while Kranti removed Phoebe Litchfield courtesy of an athletic diving catch from Jemimah at backward point.

Australia 96 for 3 trail India 198 (Rodrigues 52, Sutherland 4-46, Hamilton 3-31) by 102 runs. *—PTI*

India tour helped adapt to conditions: Glenn Phillips

New Zealand all-rounder Glenn Phillips believes playing a T20I series against hosts India has helped them learn and adapt to the conditions in the ongoing T20 World Cup. The Black Caps played a white-ball series comprising five-match T20Is and three ODIs in India before the T20 World Cup. For a country of just over five million people, standing toe-to-toe with a cricketing superpower like India is an achievement in itself, New Zealand all-rounder Glenn Phillips said on Friday, offering a perspective on the contrasting scales of the two finalists ahead of the T20 World Cup title clash here on Sunday. India, with a population of more than 1.4 billion, possesses an enviable depth of talent and could easily field multiple teams of comparable strength, Phillips observed while reflecting on the daunting challenge awaiting the Black Caps in the title clash on Sunday. "Obviously, we have got a few less people in our country, to have the luxury of choosing from, which means obviously our high-performance program has to be very specific and catered for the population that we've got," Phillips said during an interaction at the Narendra Modi Stadium ahead of the Black Caps' training session.

MENTALLY TOUGHER SAMSON HAS COME OF AGE: SHASTRI

MUMBAI, 6 MARCH

All praise for Sanju Samson's mental fortitude, former India head coach Ravi Shastri said the seasoned batter seems to have "come of age" in the ongoing T20 World Cup after realising the need for consistency and wiser shot selection.

The opener smacked a 42-ball 89 against England in the semifinals to be the hero of India's seven-run win on Thursday here. Before that, his 50-ball 97 laid the foundation of the defending champions' five-wicket win over the West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal.

"I think he is finally realising and coming to terms with the fact that he needs to be more consistent. He's got to be wiser with his shot selection, and he's got to back his strengths. The thing with Sanju is he's got every shot in the book, but lapses in concentration," Shastri said on 'The ICC Review'.

"I think he's toughened up mentally, and there's never anyone who's doubted his skill or talent ever since he made the side. What people have been disappointed with is that the run of consistency that should have been there by now isn't there, but he's come of age now," he added.

India will take on New Zealand in the summit clash in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Samson was ignored in the early part of the tournament when Ishan Kishan was preferred as opener, and Rinku Singh too got the nod ahead of the Keralite. *—PTI*

T20WC PLAYER

Samson among eight nominees announced by ICC

DUBAI, 6 MARCH

In-form India opener Sanju Samson figured in the eight-man shortlist for the T20 World Cup Player of the Tournament announced by the ICC on Friday.

The other nominees are England all-rounder Will Jacks, Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan, South Africa's pacer Lungi Ngidi and captain Aiden Markram, New Zealand's all-rounder Rachin Ravindra and batter Tim Seifert, and American bowler Shadley van Schalkwyk.

Samson, who did not play in the early part of the tournament, lit up the T20 World Cup with consecutive player-of-the-match performances.

The opener smacked a 42-ball 89 against England in the semifinals to be the hero of India's seven-run win on Thursday. Before that, his 50-ball 97 laid the foundation of the defending champions' five-wicket win over the West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal.

India will take on New Zealand in the summit clash in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Will India drop Abhishek for final?

The murmurs of concern have turned into full-blown criticism, but despite his prolonged lean patch, India are likely to keep faith in Abhishek Sharma for the T20 World Cup final against New Zealand, given their well-documented unwillingness to disturb a winning combination.

In many ways, the tournament has seen a reversal of fortunes when it comes to the Indian opening pair.

When the competition began, Abhishek was expected to be the batting mainstay at the top, while questions lingered over Sanju Samson's place, with many predicting that the event could well decide the course of his international career. Samson's assured performances have silenced many doubters, while the spotlight has increasingly shifted towards Abhishek's struggles.

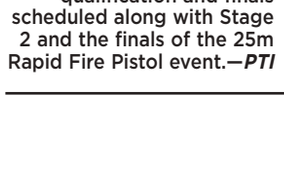
If Samson's form dominated discussions at the beginning, the decibel levels have now risen around Abhishek's wretched run in the business end. *—PTI*

–PTI

Axar is becoming one of India's greatest players: Gavaskar

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Former captain Sunil Gavaskar foresees Axar Patel becoming one of India's greatest players thanks to his all-round skills and "cricketing intelligence", which was on display during two "unbelievable" fielding efforts in the T20 World Cup semifinal win over England.Axar got rid of the dangerous Harry Brook and Will Jacks in two different yet important phases of the game, which India won by seven runs in Mumbai on Thursday night.The India vice-captain ran 24m backwards from the cover position to pull off a stunning catch off a slow-cutter from Jasprit Bumrah to dismiss Brook inside powerplay.His second act of brilliance came in the 14th over when Jacob Bethell got out.—*PTI*



–PTI

Shekhawat takes lead after Stage 1 in 25m Rapid Fire Pistol

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Bhavesh Shekhawat took an early lead after Stage 1 in the 25m Rapid Fire Pistol event at the National Selection Trials T3 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Ranges here on Friday. The Rajasthan shooter scored a total of 294–11x (99,99,96) in the three series of the first stage to take the lead. Olympian Anish Bhanwala shot 291-11x (97,98,96) to take second place, while Rajkanwar Singh Sandhu scored 291 (96,98,97) to be placed third. National Champion Suraj Sharma followed the trio with a score of 290-9x (98,95,97). The 10m rifle shooters will be in action on Saturday, with the qualification and finals scheduled along with Stage 2 and the finals of the 25m Rapid Fire Pistol event.—*PTI*

RR win inaugural PGTI's 72 The League title

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Rajasthan Regals emerged champions at the inaugural DP World PGTI's 72 The League with a commanding 12-3 win over table-toppers UP Prometheans here on Friday.

After qualifying for the finale from the league stage as the second-placed team, Regals got their revenge over Prometheans for their crushing 4-10 loss against them in the fifth round of the league.

The winning team received a stunning trophy and Rs one crore as prize money. The runner-up team took home Rs 50 lakh. Prometheans put together their two strongest players – unbeaten captain Shaurya Bhattacharya and Arjun Prasad – in the singles upfront.

However, Regals demolished that plan with Jairaj Singh Sandhu, who beat Bhattacharya 4&3, and Akshay Sharma, who defeated Prasad 2&1. With only one win required from the remaining three matches on the field, Regals sealed the deal when Aryaman Mohan and Yuvraj Singh beat Joshua Seale and Arjun Sharma on the 18th hole. Young Mohan had the honour of making the winning putt for his team when the teams tied the final hole.

In the remaining four-ball matches, Regals captain Ajeetesh Sandhu lost his first match of the tournament in the company of Michele Ortolani, while Chikkarangappa S and Dhruv Sheoran completed the 12-3 margin with an inconsequential 2&1 win over Gaurav Pratap Singh and Pranav Mardikar. *—PTI*

F1 BAHRAIN NOT TO BE REPLACED IF CANCELLED

BAHRAIN, 6 MARCH

Formula One will not replace the Bahrain Grand Prix and Saudi Arabian Grand Prix from its 2026 roster, even if both races are cancelled due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, as per reports.

A final decision on the status of both races would be made by 20 March

"First of all, our approach first of all is safety for all of the relevant stakeholders, people, and the promoter itself," said Stefano Domenicali, F1 president, to Sky Sports F1.

"We don't want to make any statement today because things are evolving, and we still have time to make the right decision. This decision will be taken together," he added. *—PTI*

LIONEL MESSI HONORED

Lionel Messi and his Inter Miami teammates were honored by President Trump at the White House –X/@MESSI

India face formidable Japan after gritty show against Vietnam

PERTH, 6 MARCH

A gritty performance in their previous group game would certainly have boosted their confidence. Still, India's task would be cut out when they face a formidable Japan in their second match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup here on Saturday.

India conceded an injury-time goal, just three minutes before the final hooter, to suffer a 1-2 defeat to Vietnam and lose a valuable point in their opening Group C match on Wednesday.

Vietnam featured in the 2023 FIFA World Cup, and a gutsy fight against them and an equalising goal through debutant Sanfida Nongrum would instil confidence among Amelia Valverde's wards.But world number eight and two-time champions Japan will be a totally different side, vastly superior to the Indians. Valverde's task could be more of maintaining compactness and working on defensive resilience, while looking to hit on the counter. *—PTI*

12 ISL clubs accuse AIFF of profiting from distressed season

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Twelve Indian Super League (ISL) clubs on Friday wrote to the All India Football Federation (AIFF), alleging that the federation stands to earn a surplus of over Rs 3.4-crore from the ongoing season despite assuring the Sports Ministry that it would not "make a rupee" from the league this year.

In a strongly-worded five-page letter sent to the AIFF deputy secretary general, the clubs wrote that the federation is retaining 40 per cent of central revenue even as participating teams are bearing the "entire" operational exposure and the bulk of the league's economic risk. "The annexed Financial Model records: AIFF Contributions: 0; AIFF Share on Ops: 0; Entire operational funding borne by clubs," the letter stated while referring to the revised financial model circulated for the 2025-26 season. In the letter signed by 12 of the 14 ISL participating clubs, it is stated that the league is projected to generate Rs 8.62 crore from streaming partner FanCode, of which AIFF would retain 40 per cent, amounting to "approximately Rs 3.448 crore". They clarified that the payment would be made "strictly without prejudice" to their rights and should not be construed as acceptance of unilateral governance by the federation. *—PTI*

PRAGUE INTERNATIONAL CHESS

Aravindh beats Jorden; Gukesh draws again

PRAGUE, 6 MARCH

Indian Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram defeated the Netherlands ' Jorden van Foreest, but world champion D Gukesh's winless run continued as he played out a draw yet again, this time against Vincent Keymer of Germany in the eighth and penultimate round of the Prague International chess festival here.

Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov leapfrogged to the pole position following a victory over local favourite David Navara.

With 5.5 points in his kitty, Abdusattorov enjoys a half-point lead over van Foreest with just one round remaining. After winning the Tata Steel Masters earlier in February, this could well be the second super-event win for the young Uzbek.

Navara is the lone player on 4.5 points occupying the third spot, while Aravindh elevated himself to joint fourth spot on four points with Keymer and Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran.

Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan, Hans Moke Niemann of the United States and David Anton Guijarro of Spain are next in the standings on 3.5 points, a point clear of last-placed Gukesh.

It was a lot of drama in the final stages of the day as Abdusattorov and Chithambaram both won from positions that looked like headed for easy draws.

Abdusattorov benefited from a Bishop blunder by Navara from a rook and minor piece endgame, and Chithambaram got lucky as van Foreest also failed to spot a simple tactic in the endgame. Gukesh drew with Keymer out of a King pawn game. *—PTI*

Premier League: Leeds boss Farke fined

BERLIN, 6 MARCH

Leeds United boss Daniel Farke has been handed a one-match suspension and a fine of 8,000 pounds for confronting the match officials after its Premier League loss to Manchester City, the Football Association (FA) said on Friday.

Soon after City won 1-0 at Leeds last month, Farke made a beeline for the referee after the final whistle and was quickly shown a red card, with assistant manager Edmund Riemer suggesting what the German said was "too aggressive". "It was alleged that the manager entered the field of play at full time to confront the match official/s, contrary to Law 12 of the Laws of the Game," the FA said in a statement.

"Daniel Farke subsequently admitted the charge against him and accepted the standard one-match suspension and 8,000 pounds fine."

Premier League: Leeds boss Farke fined and suspended Leeds is 15th in the league standings and next hosts Norwich City, a team Farke previously managed in the fifth round of the FA Cup on Sunday. *—PTI*